

New Testament

Bible Commentary 2021

by

Mike Kines

The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew Chapter 1

Why is this list of ancestry included in the gospel of Matthew? One reason for this genealogy of the Lord Jesus was to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus was the son of David. This list aids in providing evidence that the Lord Jesus fulfilled the prophecies that the Messiah is the Son of David.

People knew that when the Messiah came he would be the Son of David. The Lord Jesus asked a question of the religious leaders to point this fact out to them. In **Mark 12:35-37** the "*Son of David*" is a title of the Messiah and the fulfillment of the promise which God gave to David. God promised David that he would have a son who would sit on his throne forever.

2 Samuel 7:14-16, "*I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*"

Psalms chapter 2 further established this promise and prophecy of God's Son who made the rulers of the nations a footstool for his feet. We still wait for the Lord Jesus to return in this manner and set up his kingdom on earth. This will be fulfilled during the millennial reign of Christ after his second return.

His first appearance on earth was when he came as the lowly servant who died on the cross. His next return will be as a conquering king who puts down all of his enemies and establishes his kingdom on the earth.

Isaiah 9:6-7, "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*"

He will rule all the nations of the earth from his capital in Jerusalem. This is a clue as to why Israel and Jerusalem is constantly argued and fought over in the Middle East.

Another point of interest in this genealogy is the mention of notorious women who did not come from a Jewish background but were instead Gentiles grafted into the ancestry of the Lord Jesus.

Among these are Ruth the Moabitess, Tamar, and Rahab. I believe that these are mentioned, not only because they are literal ancestors of Jesus, but also because we see the Lord identifying himself fully with sinful humanity, even in his ancestry.

The Lord Jesus did not have an earthly father. He was born of the virgin Mary. Joseph, his adopted, legal father, did not have sexual relations with his wife Mary until after the Lord Jesus was born. This is clearly outlined in scripture so there is no point in debating whether or not Mary really was a virgin.

Joseph was a godly man and when he found out Mary was pregnant he was ready to divorce her quietly.

This might sound harsh from the perspective of today's corrupt cultural worldview but in those days he was actually doing her a favor by keeping this quiet.

It was a crushing blow to him to find out his bride was pregnant before they were married. However, the Lord explained this to Joseph by sending an angel who communicated with him in a dream.

The angel tells him that the baby conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit and is not a baby conceived in adultery or fornication. This baby was given to Mary by God in a miraculous way.

This miracle birth is foreshadowed in scripture in the account of Sarah and Abraham. She conceived Isaac when she was way too old to have children. Abraham and Sarah were past the age where they could physically have children but God gave them Isaac. God fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah.

In a similar way God gave Mary the baby Jesus with no intervention from a human male. It is interesting that the prophecy about the virgin birth mentions the Messiah would come from the "seed of the woman". Women do not have seed, obviously, but the Messiah was born from a virgin woman. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Notice the angel messenger told Joseph the name to give the baby and also told him the baby would fulfill prophecy in scripture.

The prophecy quoted in verse 23 mentions "Emmanuel", which means "God with us". In this way, we understand the Lord Jesus was not just a baby in a manger but he was and is God.

God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is very important to understand this because this is the true God. Any religion which denies the Three In One are promoting a false god.

God is one. There is only one God. This one God is also three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

I understand, also, the roles of prophet, priest, king, and also Israel, church, and the nations reflect the three in one nature of God.

Joseph obeyed the instructions the angel gave him in the dream. He took Mary to be his wife in obedience to the Lord, and when the child was born he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 2

The shepherds went directly to see the baby Jesus in a manger, but these wise men who followed a star took a side road towards Jerusalem. Perhaps they reckoned in their thoughts a king would surely be born in Jerusalem since he was the king of the Jews. Here we see a contrast in the thinking of men and the thoughts of God. God's thoughts are higher and much different than man's thoughts.

1 Corinthians 1:25, *"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*

We see here God is wiser than wise men and he is stronger than the strength of King Herod the "Great".

These wise men inquire of the pagan, cruel king the whereabouts of the King of the Jews. Herod interpreted this inquiry as a threat against himself. This is not the response of insanity but the response of someone soaked with the values of the world system.

The world system promotes power, position, prestige. These qualities defined the life of this King Herod and he responded to any competition with vicious brutality. Beware when you meet people who aspire to position in life and who are competitive.

When I look at Herod I see the result of this world system attitude and mindset. This mindset and attitude seeks to murder the Lord Jesus because he is a threat to his power and position.

They cannot kill the Lord Jesus now so they apply this hatred towards those who belong to him and are born of the Spirit.

The man seeking a name for himself through position and prestige naturally stomps on the head of the man who is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is how it has always been since Cain and Abel.

When Herod heard news of this King of the Jews he summoned the Jewish religious leaders to share their insight. They were correct in pointing to Bethlehem of Judea as the place where the Messiah would be born.

It does not seem they had any interest or did not believe the prophecy was actually fulfilled at that moment. They gave Herod Bible information but that is all it was to them. Just some Bible knowledge.

How many times do we today treat Bible prophecy of the second coming of Christ in the same manner? Is it possible the second coming of Christ could take place in our life time? Should we not earnestly look for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the rapture of the church? This is our blessed hope and we should search the scriptures daily to discern the time in which we live.

The religious leaders had knowledge but were comfortable in their position and prestige. They were indifferent, or unbelieving, because this news did not excite them like it did the wise men from the east or King Herod. They were lukewarm and indeed Christ Jesus did spew them out of his mouth when he upbraided their hypocrisy and covetousness.

After the wise men found Jesus, gave him gifts, and worshiped him, they departed back to their own lands using another route to avoid Herod. These men were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod.

We often see this method employed by angels and God to communicate with men throughout scripture from the time of Abraham and Joseph in Genesis and throughout the New Testament gospels and church history in the book Acts.

Not only did God communicate with these wise men but he continuously gave direction to Joseph through dreams and angel visits.

The Lord sent Joseph to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. The angel of the Lord warned Joseph in the dream that Herod would attempt to destroy the young child Jesus.

The apostle Matthew in writing this gospel sees the return of Jesus out of Egypt as fulfillment of prophecy.

Throughout the life of Jesus described in the gospels we see the writer moved by the Holy Spirit to point out how the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus fulfilled prophecy in scripture.

We should note this and study scripture for prophecy concerning his second return in the future. Jesus himself said he is returning again to receive us unto himself that where he is we may be also. (**John 14:3**)

Another fulfillment of scripture was when Herod killed all the male children under two years of age in Bethlehem. He was enraged the wise men outwitted him, and decided if he could not find the child he would instead kill all the children about the same age.

The Lord knew about this and sent Joseph to Egypt. God knows what the enemy will do before the enemy knows what he will do. God prepares his children and makes a way of escape, as he has promised. (**Psalm 91**)

Once again Joseph receives instructions from an angel through a dream to return to Israel, but to stay away from the area around Jerusalem and instead live in Nazareth.

It is significant Jesus was raised in the town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a place where poor people lived, and was humble circumstances for the Savior to grow up in. There were more Gentiles in that area than around Jerusalem, and no doubt Jesus came in contact with many people growing up who were not Jews.

Also, later during the ministry of Jesus and even to this day the enemies of Jesus make a big deal about Jesus being a Nazarene. This is for the purpose of casting an insult at the Lord but the Lord himself takes this as a badge of honor. When he spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus he identified himself as Jesus of Nazareth. **Acts 22:8**, *"And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."*

In world news the murderers of Christians in the middle east make a mark on the house of Christians which means "Nazarene". Even to this day those who persecute the Lord Jesus refer to him as Jesus of Nazareth.

This is meant as an insult but the Lord takes this insult and turns it into a blessing. We are blessed to be identified with this lowly savior who was raised in Nazareth.

He is King of kings and Lord of lords, and he will return again. He will reign as King from his capital in Jerusalem and every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (**Philippians 2:10-11**)

Matthew Chapter 3

John's message was repentance and a change in behavior. The people who heard John were religious people, but the Holy Spirit still convicted them of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

As a sign of repentance and humility they allowed John to baptize them in the water of the Jordan River.

John fulfilled the prophecy foretold in Isaiah describing a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. This was John's mission: to get people ready to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This message of repentance is important in preparing hearts to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Until we forsake our opinions it is doubtful we can truly put our entire faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This message of repentance was preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and also the disciples and apostles in the early church. Why do modern preachers think they can improve on this by focusing on prosperity and self-help messages? It is time to return to preaching the message John preached, Jesus preached, and the apostles preached. Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus never sinned in his life. His purpose in baptism by John was to identify himself with sinners he came to save. Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. His goal was to take the place of sinful man and be the lamb of sacrifice who stood in our place as our substitute. The Lord Jesus is and was completely sinless. He is innocent, pure, and holy. Yet he was baptized by John to fulfill the righteousness of his purpose and mission.

God the Father set his seal of approval on the Lord Jesus and proclaimed Jesus Christ to be his beloved Son. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. All three persons of the one God in one section of scripture. I don't see how anyone can read this and deny God is three in one.

Also, to further underline the truth that God is three in one we have **Matthew 28:19**, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*

Notice John the Baptist is described in detail in regards to his clothes and also what he ate. Why did the Holy Spirit include these details about John the Baptist? I think one reason is to reveal something about the gift and the calling of a prophet. A man whom God makes a prophet is outside the world system. He is peculiar, and will never fit into the world system anywhere. He may go along with people for awhile but eventually whatever he does fails. Why? Because the prophet works for God. He preaches the gospel. We have the work of someone who prophesies given to us by the apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 14:3**, "*But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*"

This is what John the Baptist did in his ministry. We have his specific words recorded for us so we can also hear his exhortation. His words were to edify the believers, exhort those who were backslidden or unbelievers, and to comfort those who went into the water. Each Christian can be used by God at times in this capacity, but there is still a specific gift in the church called 'prophet'. There are men and women who are prophets within the church today. These men and women are almost always unknown. They wash the feet of the saints through their ministry of intercessory prayer and words of edification, exhortation, and comfort.

The gifts in the church we never hear about today are apostles and prophets. There is a reason for this, which I won't expound on now, except to say these men and women do exist and are almost always completely unknown except by their close friends. Those who teach the Bible in front of churches and are titled pastors generally make very little of prophets or apostles. I'm not sure why they do this, but even in pastors I greatly admire I notice how they are dismissive toward the gift of apostle and prophet.

John the Baptist did not preach in a church building. He preached out by the Jordan River and God sent people out to where he was. He told men they were sinners and should flee from the wrath of God. He called the religious leaders of his day "snakes" which in my mind, at least, associates them with the serpent we know as the devil. How many religious leaders are there today who are really vipers? It would probably frighten us to know. I'm sure those Pharisees and Sadducees were not at all happy with the prophet dressed in fur and ate locusts.

Matthew Chapter 4

Previously when I read this chapter I viewed the temptation of Jesus as his preparation for ministry. This time as I read this I view it more as Jesus completely identifying with man in temptation.

When Jesus was baptized by John he fulfilled all righteousness. I believe Jesus is continuing the same goal of completely identifying with man in mankind's sin and in mankind's temptation. This is so men can completely identify with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. I also think this temptation revealed who Jesus was to the enemy.

It is interesting how these scriptures are worded. The Holy Spirit brought Jesus into the wilderness "*to be tempted of the devil*". God does not tempt any man with evil. We know this from **James 1:13**. There is, at the same time, a peculiar way God brings a man into situations where the devil is waiting. Why is this? It is not to hurt us, I can assure you.

On our part it is a purifying process for our faith. For Jesus I believe it was so he would be completely identified with mankind.

Jesus was tempted in every way we are and yet he was without sin. (**Hebrews 4:15**). Also, another purpose in his enduring this temptation is so he could show us the way to overcome the temptations of the devil. He shows us by his example how to overcome.

Hebrews 2:18, *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."*

Jesus did not overcome the temptation by anything which the common Christian man is not able to also employ. Jesus laid aside supernatural powers when he fought the devil and simply spoke God's word. Jesus quoted scripture. He spoke the truth of God's word, and it was a hammer which broke the rock of temptation into pieces. In the hands of Jesus the word became a sword which slashed and seared the enemy.

There is a parallel here in the temptations of Jesus with the temptation Eve went through in the garden of Eden. The parallels are laid out for us by the apostle John in **1 John 2:16**, *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* It is these three areas Satan enticed Eve. It is in these three areas also he based his temptations against the Lord Jesus. Whereas Eve and Adam fell into darkness, Jesus did not fail. He resisted the devil, and the devil had to flee.

James 4:7, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

God has promised he will not allow the enemy to tempt us beyond what we can bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13, *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

After the enemy left, angels came and attended to the Lord Jesus. No doubt they brought him food and encouragement as well.

The imprisonment of John the Baptist was a turning point for Jesus. He moved to the area of Galilee and set up in Capernaum. Matthew sees this as fulfillment of prophecy which speaks of light coming to the Gentiles living in this area. This prophecy was from Isaiah the prophet.

The message which Jesus preached was: *"repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"*. This is the same message John the Baptist preached.

The Lord Jesus called his disciples to follow him. Listed are Simon and Andrew, along with James and John. These seem to be the first called and these men made an inner circle with Jesus among the twelve disciples. It was Peter, James, and John which Jesus later chose to accompany him up on the mountain where he was transfigured. He also chose Peter, James, and John alone to go in with him when he raised a young girl from the dead.

When Jesus called these men to follow him the scripture says they "immediately" or "straight away" left what they were doing and followed him. This is how we should be. We should not hold on so

tightly to circumstances, people, possessions, or our employment when Jesus calls us to follow him. We should be ready to drop everything to follow where ever he will call us to.

As Jesus began his ministry he preached and taught in the synagogues. As he did this he also healed people. People were healed from all kind of sickness and disease, including people possessed by demons, lunatics, and people with epilepsy. These are some of the illnesses mentioned specifically here.

I do not believe Jesus or the Holy Spirit or the apostle Matthew writing this were confused about epilepsy being demon possession or called epilepsy "demon possession". It is very straight forward here in the text that these problems were separate issues. We should not attempt to malign scripture with lies that people in those days were so stupid they didn't know the difference between epilepsy and demon possession. There may be some overlapping symptoms, but I guarantee you Jesus knew the difference.

There is indeed a serious problem with demon possessed people, not only in ancient times, but even more so here at the end of the age.

Matthew Chapter 5

This collection of the words of the Lord Jesus is called 'The Sermon On The Mount'. The Lord Jesus demonstrates he is the fulfillment of the scriptures in the law and in the prophets because only the Lord Jesus lived out the sermon in which he taught them that day.

In the Bible previous to the first coming of the Lord Jesus there was a description of God's character and nature through the governmental, business, and societal laws for Israel. Also, we have accounts of God's people, their history, and specific men and women who were prominent in the formation of Israel's history and God's revelation of himself.

When the Lord Jesus appeared he fulfilled the scriptural revelation of God. He is the word of God who is made flesh. He is the expression of the written word of God in every way. When he opened his mouth and spoke it was the revelation of God.

He taught them first by revealing who is blessed. Who is blessed? Do you want to be blessed by God? This is who you are if you are blessed. You are poor in spirit, you mourn, you are meek, you hunger and thirst after righteousness. You are merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker. You are persecuted by the world because of who you are. The world will revile you and slander you for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus said we can rejoice when the world persecutes us. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The Lord Jesus fulfills all of the scriptures. He shows us the true spirit of the law, and upholds the law of God by his life and example. To those who twist God's law and take it out of context, to those who use religion for position, power, and control he has scathing words of condemnation.

The Lord Jesus takes the ten commandments and teaches the true spiritual demand those laws require. Not only is man condemned if he murders but he is also condemned if he has selfish anger or hatred in his heart. A murderer is not only someone who kills but someone who hates and is angry.

Therefore we should not be angry or hate people but instead seek reconciliation. We should desire to be reconciled to people around us. As much as possible we need to live in peace with people.

Not only is someone who commits adultery guilty but someone who looks on another with lust in his heart. God sees what is in the heart of man and not just his actions. The Lord knows what kind of person we are even if we do not carry out what is in the heart because of a fear of repercussions.

The way to deal with men who make themselves our enemies is to overcome their evil with good. We do this by praying for our enemies, and praying the Lord would bless them. If they make demands then we go beyond the demand and do more than is asked of us. Let us demonstrate by our actions how gracious and loving and forgiving God is. We are God's representatives on this earth. Remember we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The goal of our lives is to live like our heavenly Father. God is perfect, and therefore his children must also live a perfect life.

Matthew Chapter 6

The Lord Jesus examined the motives of men when they give or pray. The religious leaders were an example of what not to act like. This is a backhand rebuke to the religious leaders. He described how they acted and said, "Don't act like this."

The Lord Jesus emphasized that the heavenly Father discerns what people do and knows motives when men engage in religious activity. It is right to suspect motives of men who engage in religious activities in public. The unbelieving world is suspicious of people who claim to be religious, especially when they claim to be Christians. The Lord Jesus is also concerned about why people perform religious activities especially religious displays in public.

The Lord Jesus teaches us that instead of performing religious activities in public to do these things in secret or try not to be noticed by others. When we pray in secret and give to others in secret then we do not have to worry about wrong motives or insincerity. What is done is not as important as the attitude of one's heart while engaged in benevolent or religious activity.

The Lord provides a framework for praying according to the will of God. I won't go over every detail of this model prayer, but I think it should be pointed out who the Lord Jesus taught us to direct our prayers to. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray to our heavenly Father.

Speaking of "fathers": not everyone is a child of the heavenly Father. I've heard people say something like "we're all God's children" but that is not true. There are people who are not God's children but are the children of the devil. The Lord Jesus teaches this in **John 8:44**, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*"

The Lord Jesus also touches on motives behind the observance of fasting. His teaching here is the same as what he said about giving and praying. We should not try to impress others with fasting but instead keep it between ourselves and God alone.

Forgiveness is a bedrock issue with the Lord Jesus. He teaches if we do not forgive others who sin against us then our heavenly Father will not forgive us. It is absolutely essential to forgive everyone who sins against us. We are not allowed to hold grudges, bitterness, and hatred. Doing this separates us from God and his forgiveness. It is frightening to think how much our relationship with God depends on us maintaining correct relationships with everyone in our life. As much as it is possible with us we should try to live in peace with everyone. Blessed are the peacemakers.

The Lord tackles the subject of provision. Unbelievers are completely focused on creating provision for themselves. They go after money with all their heart and along with this comes lust for prestige, position, and power. This is idolatry and covetousness. It is the worship of self over worship of God.

Notice the words the Lord Jesus uses here to teach us what kind of attitude we are to have towards material provision: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what shall ye shall drink..."

I'm sure many people have a huge problem with this, myself included. Take NO thought? What does that mean?

I think it means exactly what the Lord Jesus says. I believe we are to completely roll these burdens of life over onto the Lord and trust in him to provide for us. Does this mean we stop working or quit our jobs? No, I think what he is saying is don't be obsessed with provision.

Our purpose in engaging the world through work is primarily to be a witness for the Lord Jesus. This follows what Paul said in **Colossians 3:23**. Whatever we do we are to do it for the Lord. Our labor is for the Lord no matter what the work is.

There are individuals in the body of Christ that the Lord Jesus sets aside for the purpose of serving the church. This may sometimes include those who stand in front of congregations on Sunday mornings. There are individuals who are gifts to the church and work for the Lord alone. They trust completely in the Lord for their provision and protection. The Lord himself is their portion and inheritance.

To understand more about this read how the Lord set apart the Levites. They did not get a land inheritance in Israel. Instead, the Lord himself was their inheritance. They were the servants of Israel and of the Lord. The same is true today in the church. There exist in the church today apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These are the Lord's gifts to the church.

What the Lord Jesus addressed here is the difference between how a Christian's attitude needs to be in stark contrast to the unbeliever's attitude.

The unbeliever has no resource except his own intelligence and abilities. For the Christian, however, we trust in God to provide for us. We do the best we can and trust the Lord to take care of us.

I've seen this in action many times in my life. I've been hired for jobs at companies where people much smarter and educated than myself found it impossible to get hired. Yet I walked right in and got hired!

How is that? Because I was not trusting in myself but trusting in the Lord to take care of me and my wife.

The Lord Jesus says to not allow the purpose of our life to be about obtaining provision (food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical supplies). We are not to make this the goal of our life. Instead, the goal of our life is to seek God's kingdom and righteousness. We put the interests of God as the goal of our life and when we do this the Lord promises he takes care of our material needs.

I find this promise absolutely true. I have been taken care of by the Lord. Ever since I was saved by the Lord I've seen him provide for all of my needs.

Also, isn't it a great relief to know you are taken care of? Wouldn't you feel such freedom if you won a million dollars? You would know your needs are taken care of for a long time.

But we have every resource available to us in God's kingdom. Just because God's kingdom is invisible does not mean that it isn't real!

The resources in the kingdom of God are real and we can trust God to supply our needs every single time. Don't live your life in fear. Do not worry about running out of material resources.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and see the Lord provide for you.

It is easier to trust in the Lord rather than worry. The result of thinking I'm the only one who can help myself is a life of stress and anxiety. I would much rather simply obey God's word and live in peace.

Matthew Chapter 7

The Lord Jesus deals with the subject of hypocrisy. Most people think the subject here is "judgment" but it is not. What the Lord Jesus discusses here is hypocrisy.

When a man is guilty of hypocrisy he can only see problems in other people but does not apply this same "judgment" to his own life.

The real point is not that we should overlook sin in other people's lives. This cannot be the correct interpretation because later in this same chapter in verse 15 the Lord Jesus exhorts us to beware of false prophets. How can we beware of false prophets if he forbids us to judge people? That seems like a contradiction.

The point is not for us to quit judging others but the point is to make sure if we get involved in pointing out a problem in someone's life we have already resolved the same problem in our own life. It is hypocrisy to point out problems in another person's life when we have the same problem in our life.

Again, let me repeat, because these verses are quoted out of context constantly: the Lord Jesus is not teaching us to stop judging. If you do a word study on the word "judge" through the New Testament you will find Christians are supposed to use discernment and good judgment. **John 7:24**, "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*"

Verse 6 seems to stand alone but for me I connect this verse back to the preceding verses. Unbelievers and false Christians quote verse 1, "judge not, that ye be not judged". In the past when it was my job to correct people and I heard them quote this I knew more than likely I was dealing with what we cover in verse 6, "...neither cast ye your pearls before swine..."

It is important not to try and correct an unbeliever or someone who is pretending to be a Christian. Why is it important? Because dealing with these people will only get you damaged. They will not receive what you say and they will drag you down into the mud and rend you with their tusks. It is stupid to try and help someone who does not want to be helped. Leave them alone and go help someone else who wants help.

I'm not implying we stop preaching the gospel, but don't attempt to correct unbelievers and false Christians. (See also **2 Timothy 2:24-26**)

How can you tell a false Christian from a true Christian? A true Christian is usually willing to listen to correction. A false Christian always defends self (in contrast to denying self).

The Lord Jesus teaches persistence in prayer works. The Lord is willing to answer prayers which are prayed according to God's will. He hears us and we can be confident he will answer our prayers. Don't give up praying. Ask, seek, and knock. Keep on asking the Lord, keep on seeking the Lord, keep on knocking on the Lord's door. He will open and he will answer. The Lord responds when we cry out to him. The main thing is to not give up but keep on believing. There are plenty of verses throughout scripture we can stand on to encourage us to persevere in prayer.

Once again verse 12 seems like it might stand alone, and it does, but in my mind I tie it back to preceding verses, especially since there is a "therefore" connecting these verses together. In light of our requesting something from God, we need to pay attention to how we are relating to people around us. We need to make sure when we pray we also live a life in which prayer can be heard. **Psalms 66:18**, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*"

The kind of man the Lord is looking for to answer prayer is the one who walks a straight and narrow life.

Straight and narrow means he only trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not trust in himself. He doesn't turn aside to other religions, philosophies, or psychology. He keeps his heart fixed on the only way to the Father and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6**)

Many people cannot bring themselves to trust only in the Lord Jesus. They turn to programs, 12 steps, support groups, philosophy, other religions. They turn to answers which the world provides them. But I say to you: if you are walking down any other path except the Lord Jesus Christ you are on the broad road to destruction.

Some people on the broad road claim they have the Lord Jesus and their eastern religion but this is a lie. They are deceived if they think they can hold on to Buddha and the Lord Jesus at the same time. They are deceived and are fallen in the trap of the devil. It is man's pride which motivates him to seek something or someone other than the Lord Jesus. It is human pride, plain and simple.

People on the broad road become false prophets. They are false examples, false teachers, and spread lies around without even thinking about it. They magnify lies through everything they do. They set examples and precedents through words, actions, attitudes. Everything in their life is designed to draw others into the broad road to destruction. Once a person does not fully accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to God then they automatically accept the lie of Satan. The lie fills them, overflows, and touches every person they come into contact with.

The same is true for the Christian in the opposite direction. A true Christian has the aroma of Christ and inspires others to deny self and lay down their lives for the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. I've been graciously given many opportunities to meet true Christians and this experience changed me. It infected me and drew me onto the straight and narrow road with them.

It saddens me when I come across someone on the broad road. It is obvious when you are around someone like this.

They don't need to be involved in a gross sin. You can just pick up on it. It's the way they talk, or don't talk, or listen, or don't listen. It is not difficult to discern someone on this broad road to destruction. They have the aroma of hellfire and their tongue is quick to curse, condemn, hate, slander, deceive, and gossip. These are the fruits to look for in people who profess Christ but are lying.

Notice the Lord tells us to beware of these false prophets. It is important to discern them and stay away from them. Do not listen to their podcasts and messages. Do not tune into their radio station or TV channel. Stay away from them. Your spiritual health depends upon it.

The Lord Jesus makes it clear that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is really a child of God. People claim to be a Christian for worldly motives and purposes. A lot of people make big money claiming to be a Christian. There are many reasons why people lie about being a Christian. Eventually it becomes plain who they really are. Stay away from them.

Whoever hears what the Lord Jesus is teaching and puts these principles into practice in their lives builds on a solid foundation. When we build our lives upon the solid rock of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ then we will not be blown away when the storms of life come. We will continue to hold fast and stand. The Lord is a sure foundation. Everyone who builds their life upon worldly principles and unbelief will eventually lose everything they worked for.

Matthew Chapter 8

When the Lord Jesus completed the sermon on the mount he helped the people who followed him. A leper who worshiped the Lord Jesus asked for healing. He said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Of course the Lord Jesus was willing to heal the leper. He touched the man and healed him. For the people this was like raising the man from the dead because in those days leprosy was a death sentence.

People ran away from lepers but the Lord Jesus went towards the leper and touched him. This gives us a picture of how God deals with us in our sinful condition. Instead of running away from us God heals us, cleanses us, and gives us new life. The Lord Jesus is the express image of the invisible God and what we see in the compassion of the Lord Jesus reveals the heart of Father God towards men.

The Lord Jesus instructs the leper to go to the priests and follow the law in resolving the issue of leprosy. In my opinion, the Lord Jesus did this because he desired for the priests to receive a witness of the Lord Jesus. He wanted them to repent and be saved as well.

A Roman centurion requests healing for his servant. The Lord Jesus is willing to go into the house of this Gentile to heal the servant but the Roman centurion expresses his faith in the authority of the word of the Lord Jesus to heal. The Lord Jesus says he never found this kind of faith within the nation of Israel. This man did not need a prayer cloth or the physical presence of the Lord Jesus to heal his servant. He just needed the word of the Lord.

To this day we need only the word of the Lord in order to be healed of sickness and disease. The Lord can save, heal, and deliver. He can raise us from the dead and does so every day. Let us press on to believe the Lord's word and receive healing which he has for us today.

After this encounter with the Roman centurion the Lord Jesus taught that Gentile believers would sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He made it clear some of those who were in Israel would not be at that feast and would instead find themselves outside where there is darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. The same is true today of many who are in the church but do not truly believe in the Lord. They will find themselves outside where there is darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. These are the brothers of the flesh who persecute the brothers of the Spirit.

I believe what the Lord Jesus described here is that not all those within the outward structure of Israel, church, or the nations are true believers. The false believers live in the house of faith but do not believe in the Lord.

There is a remnant within the body of professing believers who are the true believers and sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are the ones who are of the faith of Abraham, no matter what time period they were born in, whether during the first day with Israel, the second day with the church, or the third day in the millennial kingdom.

As the Lord Jesus continued to heal people and drive out evil spirits, including healing Peter's mother of a fever, Matthew points out that what the Lord Jesus did was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah.

Many people approached the Lord Jesus with a desire to follow him. However, the Lord Jesus often countered their shallow commitment with a challenge. One of the challenges he gave is that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. What does that mean? It clearly meant the Lord Jesus lived like a pilgrim and sojourner. He did not buy houses and lands or seek to set up his home on earth. He had a mission and he lived his whole life to complete his mission.

The Lord Jesus warns us today, if we follow him, it could mean great hardship and loss of material things. Have we counted the cost? Once we put our hand to the plow to follow the Lord Jesus we cannot look back. We cannot retrace our steps.

The Lord Jesus instructed his disciples to go across the lake and while they were on the way they encountered a storm. This storm was so bad the disciples feared for their lives, while at the same time the Lord Jesus was asleep in the boat. Out of fear they woke him up and he calmed the storm.

When they reached the other side they were confronted with a demon possessed man. This man was possessed by a legion of demons, and tormented by them. The Lord Jesus cast the demons out of the man and healed him completely. As a result the people in that region asked him to depart.

Why did they ask him to depart? Perhaps they were afraid, or maybe they saw he was a direct threat to their business of raising pigs? I don't know. But I have seen something similar in my own life. There are people in my family who saw what the Lord Jesus did for me. However, what the Lord Jesus did for me did not cause them to want him. Instead, they turned away from him like these people in the area of the Gadarenes.

I do not understand it. I was like this man, and told everyone who would listen what the Lord did for me.

Matthew Chapter 9

The Lord Jesus left the Gadarenes since he was not welcome and returned to Capernaum. He was greeted by a crowd who brought him a man sick of the palsy and laid on a bed. Jesus promptly forgave the man of his sins. Before he could heal him he discerned the evil thoughts of the religious leaders who watched him. He rebuked them for their evil thoughts and proved he had authority to forgive sins by healing the man completely.

The Lord Jesus treated the whole man and not just the spiritual. It is good to remember the Lord Jesus is still the Great Physician. Earthly doctors fail but the Lord Jesus never fails in his task. We need to ask him and the Lord can heal us. Let us put our trust in the Lord and pray for complete healing in our bodies. The Lord is able to heal us and deliver us from sin, the devil, and disease.

The Lord Jesus called the publican Matthew to follow him and he ate with sinners and publicans. See the divine doctor at work, humbling himself, and going to those who need him. Whereas the false doctors go into their private buildings, wait for people to come to them, and then cast out anyone who doesn't follow their rules. The modern church and doctors are like those ancient hypocritical leaders of society. They preen about with their prestige and pomp while all the while the people they are supposed to help languish in their suffering.

When they dared to ask the Lord Jesus what he was doing he made a simple remark I wish doctors and preachers today would hear: "*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*"
(Matthew 9:12)

The Lord Jesus used illustrations to teach them to go forward with God, and not keep looking back to types, figures, and shadows in the law which pointed to Himself. He is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. He used the illustration of sewing an old piece of cloth on another piece. It doesn't work because they both will tear. Also, one can't pour new wine into an old wine skin because it will burst.

The Lord taught me this lesson several times. Over twenty years ago the Lord showed me not to retrace my steps or go backwards. Always go forward with the Lord; don't go back. Again, he showed me this recently and I think it finally stuck to me: do NOT retrace your steps. Don't try to make what is new out of what is old. Old people, places, and things have to be left behind. It is time to go forward by faith and forget the things which are behind me. I must go forward by faith into what the Lord has for me next.

A certain ruler came to the Lord Jesus because his daughter was sick but by the time they got to her she was dead. On the way to raise the girl from the dead the Lord Jesus was touched by a woman who had an issue of blood. She tried many doctors and no one helped her. This keeps with our theme about worthless doctors which permeate society and rob people of their money and don't help people.

Here we see one touch from the Lord Jesus and the woman was completely healed from her illness. She knew immediately she was healed. The Lord Jesus continued onward to raise the girl from the dead.

The Lord Jesus said an interesting thing about the condition of the girl. He said she was not dead but asleep. I can interpret this a lot of ways. It might mean she was literally sleeping but in such a deep sleep they thought she was dead. Or she was dead and the Lord Jesus spoke in a spiritual sense that she was not dead because He is the resurrection and the life and to him no one is really dead. The Lord Jesus can raise anyone from the dead. He himself is resurrected from the dead and is the first to receive a resurrection body! In this particular miracle Matthew only says he took her by the hand and she was raised up from the dead.

See how the Lord Jesus forgave sins, healed sickness, drove out evil spirits, and raised people from the dead. He proved to everyone that he was indeed the Messiah, the Christ of God.

The Lord Jesus had compassion on the crowds because they were like sheep without a shepherd. They did not benefit from the leaders of their society, but wandered without anyone to teach them or heal them. Therefore the Lord Jesus asked his disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into the harvest fields.

I believe this is a prayer we should include in our devotions every day. Pray to the Lord he will send forth laborers into the harvest to seek and to save those who are lost. Be prepared to be the answer to your own prayer as well.

Matthew Chapter 10

After his request that the disciples pray to the Lord of the harvest the Lord Jesus appointed his twelve disciples and gave them authority to minister. The prayer request was answered. They received authority to cast out devils, heal people, and preach the kingdom.

Here is a list of the disciples beginning with Peter and ending with Judas the betrayer. These twelve pair up with one another for the task at hand. The Lord Jesus gave them specific instructions on how to behave, conduct themselves, what to bring, and where to go in their mission. The parameters of this initial mission trip was to the lost sheep of Israel. This was not a mission to evangelize the world with the gospel but instead an outreach to the lost sheep in Israel with the message of the kingdom.

The Lord provided a list of specific instructions for the disciples but his talk expanded beyond the scope of that mission and anticipated what the apostles and church would face as they preached the gospel to the world. This began in the book of Acts with the record of Paul's testimony before Roman rulers and his persecution from religious leaders.

Jesus exhorted them several times not to fear what men would do to them but instead fear the Lord God who has all power over our lives. He gave a graphic contrast in that men can kill the body but God can not only kill a man but cast his soul into hell.

Jesus warned them they faced fierce opposition even arising from their families. Those who once were close now became fierce enemies. When men follow Jesus earnestly they find their worst enemies are family and relatives. **Verse 36**, *"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."* This was the experience Jesus had. He came to his own but his own did not receive him. **(John 1:12)**. **Matthew 10:37**, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."*

The true test of someone who loves Jesus is family relationships. It is easy to justify maintaining family relationships with those who hate Christ and hate God because we tell ourselves we will witness to them and win them to Christ.

This excuse is similar to the lie a young lady told herself who started dating an unbelieving young man. "I'll win him to Jesus." But what the young lady did not realize, and what this man or woman who puts family before God does not realize is this: we cannot win anyone to Christ if we compromise biblical principles.

If we make agreements and experience intimate relationships with unbelievers we are disobeying God's word. We cannot disobey the word of God and justify it by telling ourselves we are disobeying God's word because we are trying to win our families to Christ.

The only hope unbelieving family members have of coming to Christ is for us to come out from among them and be separate. They will never respect the professing Christian as long as we live just like they do. They will never respect us or listen to us as long as we live in agreement with them.

Sooner or later the unbelieving family member or "loved one" will turn your heart cold towards the things of God. They will turn your heart cold towards the Bible, or spending time with other Christians, or even professing the Lord Jesus around them.

They can influence the compromising Christian like this because the only power the Christian has in his life is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not disobey God's word and will not support the professing Christian who disobeys God's word.

When we put family before the principles in God's word then we have effectively made the statement we love family more than Jesus.

When we make this statement Jesus says to us: "Not worthy".

You are not worthy of Jesus. You have turned your back on the Lord Jesus when you love family more than you love Jesus. And you do love family more than Jesus when you disobey God's plain word and make agreements with unbelievers and are intimately familiar with unbelievers. You are dead wrong and you are unworthy of Jesus. You cannot and will not experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life if you are putting family before God. The only relationship you will have is that he will continue to convict you of your sin and compromise and backsliding.

Let us evaluate our relationships with people in the light of what the Word of God says. Let us not deceive ourselves by familiar emotions we have for people. If we live our life according to emotion we will eventually live in disobedience and rebellion against God's word. Obedience to God's word demands we deny our self and take up our cross and follow Jesus. Don't be deceived by emotions. Don't be deceived by unbelieving family members.

Jesus says if we confess him before men then he will confess us before the Father. However, if we deny Jesus before men then Jesus also will deny us before the Father. This is the biggest deterrent we could possibly have in caving in to the fear of man. We must be brave and courageous in the face of men who attempt to come between us and Jesus Christ.

Remember what Jesus said about opposition that the Christian will encounter. He said in verse 22, *"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."*

When I read this verse I am reminded that Christians today are beheaded for their faith in Christ. This is happening right now in Iraq and areas where these murderers are butchering Christians. Let us remember to pray always for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who are enduring to the end.

Matthew Chapter 11

The Lord Jesus made it clear that John fulfilled Bible prophecy. John was the one who came to prepare the way for the Messiah, as Malachi said. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the return of Elijah. My guess is we shall see this prophecy fulfilled again in the seven years of tribulation with the two witnesses described in Revelation chapter 11. This is how we see Bible prophecy. It is more like a set pattern that repeats itself rather than a one time event or person.

John sent messengers to the Lord Jesus to ask if he was the one or should they wait for another? Evidently while in prison John's faith was shaken, but the Lord Jesus sent word back to John to think about all that the Lord Jesus did which proved who he was.

The works of the Lord Jesus testified to who he was. Do our works testify that we are Christians? Do our lives reflect the Lord Jesus Christ?

I think John may have expected a different kind of Messiah than the Lord Jesus. It seemed Israel expected a Messiah who would overthrow the Romans and establish the kingdom of Israel. These expectations are not unfounded because there is plenty of prophecy in the Old Testament pointing to the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth.

However, in his first appearance on earth he fulfilled the prophecies of the suffering servant and the Lamb who gives his life to save us. He is the substitution and sacrifice for us. Later, when the Lord Jesus appears on earth the second time it will be as the King of the nations. At that time he will establish God's Kingdom on the earth. This is what we continue to pray for as the Lord Jesus taught us in the model prayer: *"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*.

The Lord Jesus contrasted his ministry with John and concluded that no matter what approach the servants of God make in ministry they were rejected by the religious leaders. John came as one who abstained from the world and everything in it. He was a harsh man who lived apart from everyone else in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus was much different from John in his personality. But the religious leaders rejected them both.

The Lord Jesus pronounced several woes upon different cities where he preached. His woe upon them was based upon their exposure to truth and knowledge of the kingdom of heaven. The principle is that the more you know the more you are accountable. Perhaps this is why people do not really want to get too close to God or hear God's voice. The closer we get to God and the more we know of him the more accountable we become of that knowledge.

I have experienced the power of God to change my life into a different man. I experienced a dramatic transition from darkness to light in my life. At one point I was completely blind and in darkness. The next moment I stood in the brilliant presence of the Lord with my eyes blinking wide open. The Lord changed my life in a moment. This has happened to me twice, once when I was a young man in 1989, and then again as an older man in 2014.

He continues to change me in small and big ways. I no longer want to draw back from God's presence. I want to be thrown into the light of the Lord Jesus Christ and receive revelation of him.

I heard his voice. I want to hear his voice today. I want to hear him speak to me. I can see he is changing me and gives me a greater fervor for holiness and a greater hunger for righteousness. My heart cries out to the Lord Jesus.

When I read the final verses in this chapter my heart cries out, "Amen! Lord, I come to you and I want to find rest in you alone. Lord, grant me grace to take your yoke and your burden because it is easy. I cannot live under the taskmaster of self and Satan. I desire to live only for you, Lord Jesus."

Matthew 11:28-30, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

The Lord knows we are weak and bowed down. He experienced humanity when he was here with us in human flesh. He knew what it was like to be weak and frail in a human body. Not only do our bodies get tired and sick and wore out but also our mind and emotions get worn down over time. We run out of gas each day, each week, each month, each year that goes by. I do notice this more and more as I get older. I don't have the strength or stamina of mind or body I once had.

The Lord Jesus invites us to come to him. This is more than an invitation. This is also a word of command: "Come unto me". Don't go to the world or embrace the world's solutions. The world system

cannot fix you. They are blind and helpless and hopeless. We do not want to settle in the congregation of the dead. Instead, we want to go to him. The Lord Jesus speaks to us today, if you can hear his voice. He says, "Come unto me."

Why does the Lord Jesus want us to come to him? Because he is the only way. He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to Father God except through the Son the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has the Son has the Father also. But he that does not have the Son of God does not have Father God. If we turn aside from the Lord Jesus, there is nothing left except empty religion, philosophy, and then death.

Let us turn our heart to the Lord Jesus now. When we do we find rest for our soul. He heals our mind, our emotions, and our body. He gives new life to our spirit within us. Our spirit comes alive and can sense the kingdom of heaven. Our spirit can hear, see, and feel the Lord Jesus.

The only rest is the Lord Jesus. All places of rest in this world are false. They want you to pay for rest but the Lord Jesus gives rest freely.

Why do people turn away from the Lord Jesus? I do not know. All I know is that his word is true and he gives me rest for my soul.

Matthew Chapter 12

Jesus provoked the religious leaders by what he knew gave them a reason to accuse him.

I am glad Jesus used the Sabbath to provoke religious people because even today the Sabbath is confused by religious people. People use the doctrine of Sabbath to bring men into religious bondage in the same way the ancient Jewish Christians used circumcision.

They attempt to lay the burden of the law on the shoulders of men but Jesus fulfilled the law of God for us. We cannot fulfill God's law; only Jesus can fulfill God's law.

Those who insist Sabbath keeping is part of serving the Lord today do not understand what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his completed work upon Calvary. Jesus said, "It is finished." He completed everything for us: salvation, sanctification, justification, and glorification. All of this was done by the Lord Jesus. We enter this gift by faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished. There is nothing we can add and we cannot take anything away from it.

The only work we have is to believe in the Son of God.

When the religious leaders rebuked the disciples of Jesus for eating grain on the Sabbath the Lord Jesus rebuked them and said he was the Lord of the Sabbath. Since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath then all I need is Jesus. When I have Jesus I have everything I need, including the Sabbath. Jesus is my day of rest. **Colossians 2:16**, "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*"

Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and as a result the religious leaders wanted to kill him. This demonstrates how crazy a man is when he is possessed by a religious spirit.

Jesus withdrew from these murderous people and continued to serve and help those who needed him. Matthew points out that Jesus fulfilled the scripture in Isaiah: "*A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, til he send forth judgment unto victory.*" (**Matthew 12:20**) This demonstrates the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. He invites us to come to him and find rest for our souls. He does not turn anyone away no matter how broken or messed up our life is.

I remember when this verse became important to me. I was a young Christian working in a ministry for people with life controlling problems. One day as I read Isaiah I ran across this verse and knew it applied to the Lord Jesus. I underlined it in my Bible and wrote in the margin "never give up on anybody". I needed this every day because there were plenty of reasons to give up.

The Lord Jesus doesn't give up. He does not give up on anybody. He did not give up on me, even though for many years I gave up on myself. I never turned my back on the Lord Jesus since I was saved in 1989. But I lived for years when I did not obey his specific calling on my life.

He did not give up on me. No matter how bruised I was, no matter how low the fire of faith burned in my heart: he did not give up on me.

Eventually the wind of the Holy Spirit blew on those glowing embers again. He put some kindling in the stove of my heart. He blew on those tiny flames until my life glowed with his presence again. I can feel the flames of the Holy Spirit burning again in my heart right now. I feel the heat of God's word burning in my bones and in my body and filling my heart and mind. My spirit is alive, thank God, my spirit is alive.

I thank the Lord Jesus Christ today for giving me life and life more abundantly.

I thank you, Jesus, for saving me and giving me life. I love you Lord Jesus! Amen.

When Jesus cast devils out of people the religious leaders accused him of casting out devils with the power of Beelzebub. They said Jesus used sorcery to cast out demons. However, Jesus warned them of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

As he rebuked them he warned them that every idle word men speak they will give an account of. By a man's words he is justified and by a man's words is he condemned.

There is no other verse I know which underlines so strongly the importance of only speaking words which are good and edifying. We should pray always that God will set a guard and a watch over our mouths that only what is good will come out of us. This is another reason it is so important to be renewed in the spirit of our mind by reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon the word of God.

Jesus says the people who hear him would be more accountable than the ancient pagan cities which God judged with fire and brimstone. Why? Because the more light we experience the more we are accountable. We need to live in the light we are given. To whom much is given, much is required.

Jesus' family came looking for him. They interrupted Jesus while he taught the people. Jesus told the people his mother, brother, and sisters are those who hear God's word and put it into practice. This points back to what Jesus said earlier in **Matthew 10:37**, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."*

Matthew Chapter 13

Jesus taught the people with parables. When asked why he taught in parables Jesus said parables were used so that some would understand and some would not understand. Spiritual seekers could understand the parable but others who did not seek truth would not understand. This latter group assumed Jesus was telling children's Bible stories.

This is true today. Unbelievers think Christians gather to listen to children's stories. But those who hunger and thirst for righteousness know that within the gospel the greatest hope is contained. The gospel is the power of God for salvation.

The first parable described how different people received the word of God. The meaning of the first parable explained the purpose why Jesus spoke in parables. The word of God was like seed which fell on different kinds of soil. People have different attitudes and hear the word of God according to what is currently in their heart. In other words, those who have no intention of obeying God's word can never understand it.

Those whose hearts are set on the world system hear God's word according to that attitude.

Those who have their hearts set on the kingdom of God hear the word of God in a much different light.

Jesus gave four different types of soil. The first type was "wayside" soil, the second was "stony places", the third was soil encumbered by "thorns", and the last category was good soil.

When the disciples asked Jesus for the meaning he told them the different soil types were different categories of people who heard the word of God. Also, another point to remember is that "fowls" who came to eat up the seeds are equated with Satan. Throughout scripture birds are often a symbol or type of evil person or evil spirit.

In the second parable Jesus again spoke of sowing seeds but this parable had an entirely different meaning. This second parable was about the end of the age and a harvest. Jesus described angels binding evil people and casting them into fire. The righteous people were separated from the evil people. The righteous were rewarded but the evil people faced punishment. It is clear Jesus teaches two groups of people exist. The context of this parable was within the church. The tree represents the church but it was an abnormal and monstrous tree with "birds" growing in it. This describes how the church was infested with people hosting evil spirits and unconverted people who take control of the outward church. A lot of this describes the aberration of Catholicism but also many other cult offshoots sprout from Protestant churches.

We are unable many times to know true from false brethren but we can rest in the fact that God knows the difference. A time comes when God separates those of the flesh and those who are of the spirit. I am reminded of the parable of the ten virgins also when I think about this end time judgment.

In verse 44 the third parable began. This was the parable of the pearl of great price. In this parable we see the value which the Lord Jesus placed upon his church. He gave everything, literally pouring out his life, to purchase this pearl of great price. This demonstrated the value which the Lord placed upon the church.

When Jesus asked his disciples if they understood they reply that they understand. He encouraged them, therefore, to also teach others what he taught them.

Jesus returned to Nazareth. As we know, a prophet is without honor in his hometown and among his own people, so he was unable to do much for these people. They did not have faith or belief in him.

Now let's take a closer look at this verse which describes the angels who separate the wicked from the just.

Matthew 13:49-50, *"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

Twice in **Matthew chapter 13** Jesus taught there was a separation between two groups at a future judgment. In this judgment angels came forth as agents to separate the wicked from the righteous. The wicked were cast into a furnace of fire where they wail and gnash their teeth. Hell is very real and is a place of punishment for the wicked.

The question we should ask ourselves right now is this: "Who are the wicked?"

The Bible told us who the wicked were very plainly. **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**, *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"*

Angels cover the planet and looked for every person who was not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every single man and woman who did not know or believe in the Lord Jesus Christ was taken by the angels and cast into a furnace of fire where there was wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This is a serious subject to consider. This should urge us who are saved to pray more fervently for our lost family and friends. We should earnestly intercede on their behalf. We pray their hearts will soften to the truth and they may repent and put faith in Jesus Christ.

I don't think anyone this side of eternity can truly comprehend the finality of death. We always think there is more time in life, more chances to live, another day, another week. But as we have seen recently with the sudden death of multitudes we are not promised another day. Death can come at any time. Satan roams this planet looking for those whom he can devour. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Our only hope against the certainty of death is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was crucified, he died, and he was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead and afterward he ascended into heaven. He is now at the right hand of the father and is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him. There is no other way. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through him. (John 14:6). He will return again to receive Christians to himself so that where he is we may be also. Even so, Lord Jesus, return to us quickly. Amen.

Matthew Chapter 14

John the Baptist publicly corrected Herod. As a result he was imprisoned by Herod. He was not immediately executed but the devil inspired a plot which resulted in his beheading.

Jesus departed the area and was pursued by crowds who asked for his help. Jesus fed the thousands of people with only five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus blessed the food, gave it to his disciples, and the thousands were fed. Twelve baskets were gathered after everyone ate.

The feeding of the thousands with five loaves and two fish was recorded in all of the gospel accounts. This was a central message in the gospels. This miracle reflected how God fed the people of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. It showed that Jesus fulfilled the qualifications of the Messiah.

It was not yet time for Jesus to be crowned king of Israel at that specific time. First he needed to go to the cross and so he dismissed the crowd after they were fed and left overs collected.

After the people ate and the disciples collected the leftovers Jesus instructed the disciples to enter a boat and cross the lake. Meanwhile as they left Jesus climbed a mountain and found a place to pray.

Since the Lord Jesus took time to pray so should we. We need to spend time communing with the Father in isolated prayer. This communion is vital to spiritual life and spiritual growth. Christians are called not only to pray for themselves but to also intercede for the church and the salvation of the lost.

We pray and intercede for the church. We pray the church will be revived in our generation and Christians will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We need to pray for Christians to have an evangelistic fervor to reach their coworkers and their families for Christ.

We need to pray for Christians all over the world who face persecution and martyrdom for their faith. We need to pray that in the face of adversity our brothers and sisters will be strong in faith and not fail.

We need to pray for leaders and for those who are in authority.

We need to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers and workers into the harvest field.

We need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and salvation for Israel. The gospel is to Jew first and then the Gentile as well. We need to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Israel.

We need to pray for an end to the murderers who persecute and kill Christians and Jews in the middle east.

The Lord Jesus walked out to his disciples on the lake. When the disciples saw him approach they were afraid and thought he was a ghost. He reassured them that it was he.

Peter, filled with a little faith, asked the Lord if it was really the Lord Jesus to allow him to go out on the water as well to meet Jesus. Jesus invited him to come out on the water. At first Peter kept his eyes on Jesus but when he looked to the left and right and saw the stormy waters he began to sink.

This is a good example of how faith works. When we fix our faith on Jesus we rise above the law of sin and death. We defy the gravity of a sin stained life but when we turn our eyes upon self or circumstances we immediately fall.

Peter does the right thing by calling out to Jesus to save him. Jesus saved him, they got into the boat, and immediately they were at the shore.

This reminds me of **Hebrews 12:2**, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith...*" We do not need to look anywhere else for salvation, deliverance, healing, or peace in life. Jesus is the way to the heavenly Father. Let us not glorify or pursue any other religion or philosophy but Jesus only and the gospel alone.

Jesus healed crowds of people in the area of Gennesaret. Some were healed only by touching the hem of his garment.

Let us go back now and focus on when Jesus went up into a mountain to pray.

Matthew 14:23, "*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*"

When Jesus came to earth he became fully man. No doubt as a human he became exhausted. He needed time alone to pray and seek his Father. He needed this just like we do today.

A lot happened in his life. He received news his good friend was murdered in prison. He evaded the attention of Herod by moving to another area but the crowds continued to follow him. He was filled with compassion for the crowds of people who found him. He served them, healed them, fed, and taught them. He fed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish.

He also had much to look forward to in the hours, day, and weeks to come. This going up into a mountain apart reminds me of the time he took his disciples up into a mountain and was transfigured before them. Perhaps he sought this encouragement from his heavenly Father and also spoke with Moses and Elijah.

When he came down from the mountain he walked on water. He walked across the sea to where his disciples saw him and they thought he was a ghost.

The only way forward in our lives is to seek the Lord in private prayer. It is where we will find the encouragement, focus, and also revelation from the Lord which enables us to rise above our circumstances.

If Jesus needed to seek time alone for prayer we certainly need to find a secret place to pray. The only thing which hinders this secret prayer is pride in our hearts. Pride makes us think we can live in our own determination and willpower. It tells us our own opinions are more important than hearing from the Lord himself. It is pride which leads to unbelief. This kind of unbelief places little value on prayer and seeking God.

We need to lay aside this pride, and humble ourselves, and seek the Lord. It is time to seek the Lord.

Matthew Chapter 15

Here we see a remarkable contrast between the religious leaders and the Lord Jesus.

They attempted to correct him for eating with unwashed hands. This was a violation of their religious tradition.

The Lord Jesus turned the table and demonstrated how they disobeyed the clear commandment in God's word to honor parents by their giving to man-made religious organizations instead of their parents.

The Lord Jesus looked at the heart of each matter and did not treat anything from a surface perspective.

He rebuked his disciples for their lack of insight into what he taught them. He explained to them plainly that what a man eats goes into the stomach and is then expelled. But what comes out through his mouth (in speaking) comes from a heart where there is murder, adultery, blasphemy, and a list of other sins.

Therefore, the Lord Jesus taught them to deal with the heart of the matter and not the surface. It was superficial to be concerned about washing hands when people were taught to dishonor their parents. It was superficial to worry about what foods were clean or unclean when they spoke blasphemy and evil.

The Lord Jesus described the religious leaders as "straining a gnat and swallowing a camel." They majored on minor points. Their perspective was upside down and inside out.

This is what happens when the world system infiltrates the house of faith. It focuses on what God despises or is unimportant. The American church is a good example of what the Lord Jesus repudiated in the religious leaders of his day.

This woman from Canaan was a Gentile and she pursued Jesus so her daughter could be healed from demon possession.

This is an interesting account since the Lord's words and actions seem peculiar when looking at this encounter on the surface.

However, we are taught by the Lord in the preceding verses not to look at an issue on the surface but attempt to see the real heart of the matter.

If we look at the entirety of the life of the Lord Jesus we know he was always moved with compassion by the needs of everyone who came to him. Several times Jesus went out of his way to minister to Gentile people, including a demon possessed man in the Gadarenes and the servant of a Roman centurion.

So why does he say such odd things here and seem to brush off this woman's request? We must attempt to read between the lines of what Jesus said.

It is true Jesus had a priority mission during his earthly ministry to Israel first. The gospel goes to the Jews first. However, within this priority there was time and room for Gentiles.

Ultimately we see God's plan, revealed by the apostle Paul, that the church is comprised both of Jews and Gentiles. This plan takes shape throughout the book of Acts.

So what was happening here with this Gentile woman? In my opinion, I think the Lord Jesus challenged the faith of the woman and also the prejudices of his own disciples. I think he pushed her and challenged her faith. He was also showing his disciples that God does love people outside of Israel.

Does the Lord do this at times with us today? Does he sometime delay answers to prayer in order to stretch our faith and cause us to grow in grace?

Yes, we are called to persevere in faith and to pray continuously.

Sometimes the prayer request may seem impossible to us, but nothing is impossible with God. We must continue to come before God's throne of grace and not give up.

This woman did not give up. Finally the Lord said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

This is what I seek in life. I want to pursue the Lord Jesus until he turns around and says to me, "Mike, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

From that very hour the woman's daughter was healed.

Jesus went up to a mountain and sat down. The people followed him there and brought all of the sick people. He healed all of them. The blind, dumb, and maimed. The dumb spoke, the maimed were made whole, the lame walked, and the blind could see again. They all glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus had compassion on them and, working with his disciples, fed this multitude of people using seven loaves of bread and a few fish. This was the second miracle of provision. This miracle was for the provision of the people who were there but it was also a lesson for us today. The Lord Jesus is our provider. Jehovah Jireh is our provider.

What did Jesus say about the religious leaders?

Matthew 15:14, *"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."*

This was the response the Lord Jesus gave when the disciples told him the religious leaders were offended. Jesus said to leave them alone.

How can we apply this to our current religious system? Is it true these modern churches are run by men who share the same characteristics as these ancient religious leaders whom the Lord Jesus repudiated?

Leave them alone.

How can I apply this to my life today? One simple way is to not listen to men who obviously preach a false gospel.

One false gospel is the one which focuses on self-help rather than denying self and laying down one's life for the Lord Jesus and the gospel.

Popular preachers promote what is generally known as the "prosperity" gospel. This false teaching grew out of hyper-faith distortions from previous decades of heresy in Pentecostal and charismatic circles. I don't condemn all the teachings of Pentecostals and charismatics but it was in those churches this cancer started (as far as I know in my own personal experience and through my own research).

False gospels may include some truth but they focus on unimportant points rather than proclaiming the same truth which Jesus and the apostles taught.

Some preach only doctrine rather than the gospel. This also can lead to giving people wrong ideas about salvation, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Some churches only focus on their distinctive and do not teach the entire counsel of God's word.

Others claim to preach the Bible chapter by chapter but take so much time focusing on unimportant trivia that the true message of the gospel is drowned in a million insignificant details.

We need to preach the entire Bible while at the same time emphasizing the gospel which the Lord Jesus and the apostles taught.

The only way a preacher can do this is when he himself is immersed in God's word. If the word of God is in the man it seeps into his comments while he speaks. The spirit and mind must be saturated with the word of God.

As a sincere Christian I do not need to listen to any man who is a "blind leader of the blind". I do not want to support them, their churches, or their ministries with my time, energy, or resources. I do not want my family to sit under their false teachings. I do not want to expose myself on a continual basis to false or distorted Bible teaching.

Do I really think I am more spiritual than those early followers of Christ of whom he warned "Let them alone"?

If I continue to subject myself and my family to false teachers then I am also disobeying the command of the Lord Jesus when he said "Let them alone".

Let's remember scripture teaches us to fellowship with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:22, *"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, **with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**"*

Matthew Chapter 16

The religious leaders challenged the Lord Jesus to show them a sign. The Lord Jesus demonstrated many times who he was but they did not believe. They had no desire to believe in the Lord Jesus. Their request was not sincere but they looked for more reasons to accuse Jesus.

Jesus told them they were an evil and adulterous generation and no sign was given to them except the sign of Jonah.

Jesus explained the sign of Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days. In the same way, Jesus was in the belly of the earth three days and he resurrected the third day.

This is the sign given to unbelievers: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is the gospel Jesus preached and the apostles preached: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus warned his disciples to stay away from the leaven of the religious leaders. They interpreted this in terms of literal bread but Jesus warned about the teachings of the religious leaders.

How can we apply this to our life? We must be filled with the true bread of life, Jesus Christ. We must feed upon this bread of life so when we encounter false teaching we can discern it and stay away from it. The only way to discern leaven from true bread is to know the true bread first. Once you know the truth you won't be easily deceived by lies of false religious leaders.

Jesus takes his disciples to an area by themselves to have a conversation. This area was called Caesarea Philippi.

He asked, *"Who do men say I am?"*

Their reply was that some believed he was John the Baptist returned from the dead. Others believed he was Jeremiah, Elijah, or one of the prophets returned.

Then the Lord Jesus asked them, *"Who do you say that I am?"*

Peter spoke up and said that he knew the Lord Jesus was the Christ of God.

Jesus told him and the group not to share this information with anyone else. Even though it was true Jesus is the Christ at that specific time it was not yet the hour for everyone to know this. People had many ideas about Messiah and what Messiah should do.

Jesus made it clear only the heavenly Father could reveal this to Peter. We can only know the Lord Jesus Christ by revelation given to us from God. There is no other way men can truly know the Lord Jesus except by revelation from God.

Jesus taught about denying self and taking up our cross.

After he confirms he is Messiah Jesus taught them his mission was to go to Jerusalem and die on the cross. This was to fulfill the scriptures which describe how Messiah suffered and died as the Lamb of God to bring salvation.

However, Peter did not understand and tried to correct Jesus. Jesus rebuked Satan who was really the one who inspired these words through Peter.

It is interesting how Peter could be spiritually influenced by the heavenly Father one moment and then later he repeated what the devil said.

Jesus rebuked him and taught them unless they deny self and take up the cross they cannot be his disciple.

Verse 24-26, *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

I like to quote this because this is a message we don't hear much anymore. This is a message of losing your life and not improving your life! This is the message we need to hear right now in the church if we want to be part of God's remnant in these last days. We are called to lose our lives and not improve our lives. We are called to lay down our lives for Jesus and for the gospel.

Who Is Jesus?

Matthew 16:15-16, *"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

This question was really the most important question any man will answer in his life. Who is Jesus? Whether or not a man answers that question now, he certainly will answer that question later on.

Eventually, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (**Philippians 2:10-11**)

However, we do not want to wait until it is too late for us to benefit from knowing him. We can know the Lord Jesus right now and we can receive eternal life by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. If we wait until after we are dead or after he returns it will be too late to benefit from knowing who he is. We can benefit right now from knowing the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Who is Jesus? Many people attempt to discredit the Lord Jesus. Entire religions are devoted to blaspheming who he is and discrediting him.

Every cult and false religion out there in some way mocks, ridicules, belittles, minimizes, or outright blasphemes who Jesus Christ is.

However, one day that will end. One day everyone will know who Jesus is. For many it will be too late but for those who know him and love him now we will enter joy unspeakable and full of glory. We shall see him as he is and we will be like him.

Who is Jesus? He is not just a man, not just a prophet. He is the Son of the living God. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No man can come to God the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6, Acts 4:12**)

Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins. He was buried in a tomb. He rose again the third day. He was seen and witnessed alive by many witnesses, including the apostles he chose. He ascended to heaven and promised he will return again. The angels there on the day he ascended said he will return again in the same manner he ascended.

Zechariah 14:4, *"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Matthew Chapter 17

The Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured on a mountain. The Lord Jesus took three disciples with him up on the mountain: Peter, James, and John. There was no explanation as to why these three disciples were taken. We do know, however, from the second letter of Peter it made a big impact on Peter's life. (**2 Peter 1:16-18**)

When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain Moses and Elijah spoke with him. The disciples recognized these Old Testament saints. Peter blurted out he was glad they were there because they could build three tents for them. However, he was interrupted by God the Father from heaven saying, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased! Hear him!"* (**Matthew 17:5**) If these disciples were not already awed by the transfiguration of Jesus and the appearance of Moses and Elijah they were now awe struck when they heard God's voice. After the glory of God withdrew the disciples looked up and there was only Jesus.

The disciples asked the Lord Jesus about Elijah. The Lord Jesus said Elijah did come and John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah making the way for the Lord.

They met a man whose son was a lunatic. The symptoms resembled an epileptic but this man was not an epileptic. He may have displayed similar symptoms but this problem clearly came from a demonic source. This does not mean or imply that every person who suffered from epilepsy was demon possessed. As a matter of fact, other scriptures make it clear that Jesus and his disciples understood the difference between epilepsy and demon possession. Do not listen to people who malign scripture with the lie that people in ancient times did not know the difference between epilepsy and demon possession.

The man approached Jesus because the disciples could not cure the man's son. The Lord Jesus was grieved by the lack of faith in his disciples and cast the demon out. The man's son was completely cured.

The Lord Jesus explained to his disciples that this particular demon only came out after fasting and prayer. Some demons are more difficult to cast out than others. See also Ephesians chapter 6 for more information on spiritual warfare.

After this Jesus taught his disciples again about his death and resurrection. Jesus described to his disciples he would be killed but rise from the dead on the third day. Evidently the disciples could not understand or did not believe what he said but these statements make the disciples very sad.

The Lord Jesus taught he was not obligated to pay taxes since he is the Son of God but so no one would be offended he told Peter to pay the tax with a coin he found in the mouth of a fish. Jesus gave him detailed instructions on how to catch the fish with a hook and get the coin out of the mouth of the fish. From this we learn to give Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We pay our taxes but we give our heart and life to God and not the government.

Prayer And Fasting

Matthew 17:21, *"Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."*

This discussion with his disciples about the reasons they could not drive out a demon was couched between the Lord Jesus being transfigured on the mountain and another conversation with his disciples about his death and resurrection.

Within this context the incident of the man's son who was lunatic is a side note. However, it is important to look at side notes. But let's remember within the context Jesus was shown in glory and was predicting his death and resurrection. All spiritual warfare needs to be seen in the light of the glory of Jesus Christ and in what he accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. It is easy to get distracted by the drama which the enemy creates. Demons enjoy getting attention or distracting us to our own self instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should focus always on what Jesus did for us.

There are two reasons why the disciples were unsuccessful in healing the man's son of the devil. One reason was a lack of faith. The other reason was this particular devil was more resistant. The Lord Jesus said this "kind" only goes out when the one commanding it to leave was prayed up and fasting.

This underlines the importance of living a disciplined life of prayer and also setting aside times for fasting.

I go through different times when I fast, not just from food, but also from normal activities people engage in such as entertainment. It is good to take a step back from constantly feeding our minds on entertainment and technology. It is good to get out of this mindset and think about something else besides what is in the news headlines.

The Lord Jesus spoke of fasting from food. Jesus never said his disciples would not fast. He was questioned one time why his disciples did not fast as did the disciples of John the Baptist or even the Pharisees. Jesus replied they did not fast because he was still with them. But a time would come when they would fast.

No doubt when they were all in one accord in the upper room before the day of Pentecost they fasted while they prayed.

Also, we see an example of Peter fasting when he receives the vision of the sheet let down from heaven three times with the "unclean" foods in it.

Saul of Tarsus, after he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, fasted and prayed until Ananias prayed for him and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Some people may have a difficult time fasting because of health issues like diabetes. In these cases I think fasting from things such as entertainment and spending time reading the Bible and praying is a good alternative fasting.

Let's remember there are spiritual enemies which cannot be defeated except through special consecration from the Christian. We should take this to heart and make sure we pray and spend regular seasons fasting.

Matthew Chapter 18

When the disciples considered greatness in God's kingdom they probably thought of the greatness of the Roman government and their religious leaders. This "greatness" was the exact opposite of the greatness which Jesus taught.

In God's kingdom greatness is measured by humility. Jesus illustrated by setting a child in front of them and explained that greatness in God's kingdom is like a humble child. He taught them unless they changed their minds about "greatness" and became as humble as a child they could not enter the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who humbled himself like a child was considered great in the kingdom of heaven.

This demonstrated that the world system we live in is completely upside down and inside out from who God is and what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Satan took what he knew about God and turned it upside down and inside out in order to imprison mankind in this world system. This system suppresses all which is spiritual about man. This system exalts the material, glorifies money (provision), and puts emphasis on exalting self above others. The world system is opposite of the kingdom of heaven.

This is why the disciples found it difficult understanding greatness. If they were brainwashed by the world system how much more are we brainwashed and deceived in today's world?

Today we have media, the internet, television, radio, entertainment, and the news. We are saturated every day with propaganda from Satan and a corrupt world system he built in rebellion against God.

The Lord Jesus made an interesting statement in **verse 5**: "*whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*"

He described the attitude the world had against the humble Christian.

The world hates Christians because Christians express humility like Jesus. The world hates this attitude because it does not fit their mindset of competition, pride, and self-improvement. They cannot abide humility and mock it as being childish, naive, or sheep-like.

Humility is all of those things. Christians are child-like, naive (innocent as doves, discerning as a snake), and sheep-like. Jesus used the illustration of sheep to describe his followers.

We should take to heart the warning the Lord Jesus issued against those who would harm "these little ones". I believe the Lord Jesus spoke of literal children, new Christians, and also in contrast to the world the true Christian is a "little one".

Hear the woe Jesus pronounced upon those who offend these little ones? I cannot think of a worse fate for anyone than those who stumble new Christians, children, or Christians in general. The Lord Jesus said it would be better if a millstone were hanged around their neck and they were drowned in the depth of the sea.

The Lord Jesus taught how serious it was to allow sin in our life by using a graphic contrast of cutting off a limb or gouging out an eye to avoid sin. He said it would be better to enter heaven maimed than to go into hell with both hands or both eyes.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (**verse 10**)

The Lord Jesus taught about the ministry of angels who watch over children, new Christians, and Christians in general. Angels watch over us. I pray I do not do anything to embarrass or cause these angels shame while watching my life. May the Lord help me to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus revealed the heart of the heavenly Father toward these little ones. It is not God's will any of these little ones perish. The Lord desires us to be reconciled to God and part of reconciliation with God is a right relationship with people.

The Lord provided a pattern in reconciling relationships with others. I knew people who used these scriptures to justify throwing someone out of fellowship but this was not what the Lord Jesus taught here. The Lord Jesus did not give instructions on how to get rid of someone.

When reading this in context we know it is God's will to save every straying sheep. These instructions were given to restore a man who went astray.

How sad that people instead use these same verses to justify putting people out of fellowship, ministry, or church.

When the Lord Jesus said "let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" do you automatically assume that meant shunning the man?

I once thought shunning is what Jesus meant until I stopped and realized Matthew's gospel is written by a former publican and heathen.

The Lord Jesus was not telling us to throw someone away!

The Lord Jesus said when a man rejected our one-on-one attempt at restoration, and he rejected multiple people trying to restore him, then the real work of praying and interceding truly begins.

The Lord Jesus called publicans to serve him as apostles. The Lord Jesus ate with publicans and sinners. The Lord Jesus was not in the business of throwing away people. He tried to save men and not throw them away.

The Lord Jesus spoke on binding, loosing, and agreement. I think the Lord Jesus taught about intercession and praying for the brother who went astray. The Lord Jesus painted a picture of how we should bind every devil in hell which was influencing the straying brother. We should fast, pray, and not give up on anyone who goes astray.

The Lord Jesus left the ninety-nine and looked for the one lost sheep. Why do we assume these scriptures talk about putting a brother out of fellowship?

It is sad how religious people abuse scripture in order to throw away people in their fellowship, ministry, or church.

For more confirmation look at Peter's response to Jesus' teaching. He was amazed to learn that he should show such grace and mercy to an offender. He offered to forgive someone seven times. But the reply of Jesus was not seven times but seventy times seven.

Basically we should never stop forgiving anyone or loving anyone. We should always hope for the best and continue to believe God to turn the brother around.

He told them the parable about fellow servants who are forgiven debts but one of these servants does not forgive a fellow servant. As a result, the master of the servant brings judgment upon the hardhearted servant.

The Lord Jesus taught us this: if we do not forgive others, we will not ourselves be forgiven. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Don't forgive, and your heavenly Father will not forgive you.

Even on the cross as he died Jesus forgave those who tortured and killed him.

Forgiveness is a vital issue which connects human relationships to our relationship with God. Let us not forget to forgive people from the heart. People may still hate us and shun us but at least we can go to God in prayer and say freely, "Lord, I forgive! I forgive, oh Lord, I forgive them!"

Two Or Three

Matthew 18:20, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

We should drill this into our head over and over: physical, material buildings made with stone, lumber, and cement are not the church! It doesn't matter if we put the biggest steeple and cross in the county on top of the building that is still not the church.

The New Testament made it clear that physical buildings were not the church, but the church was people who believed in the Lord Jesus. The building was a meeting place for believers.

However, believers can meet anywhere. Church can be anywhere two or three believers gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Honestly, there were times in my life I felt more of God's presence when I stood sharing my testimony in a prison than in church buildings in front of stone-faced religious people.

Do we believe the promise of scripture here?

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

If the Lord Jesus was in the midst of us then we were in church. We do not need a roof over our heads, or a pulpit, or a choir loft. We don't need any of this. Sure, those things are nice and encouraging if used properly in the right perspective.

In my experience when people say "let's go to church" they do not mean they go to meet other believers. Instead, they mean they go to a building where they sing songs and listen to a man stand up on a platform and give a speech (most times about things not even in the Bible).

I experienced the best church with just me and one other. My best memories of church was with one brother and a ragged Bible on the table in between us. I cherish the memories of drinking coffee and sharing the things of God with a brother. I felt the Holy Spirit in those meetings and my life was changed.

I also sat in hundreds of "church" meetings where my heart was more discouraged when I left than when I arrived.

From now on I do not want to be part of dead religion. I don't want any part of entering buildings full of spiritually dead people who go through religious routines. Instead, I will search for individual brothers and sisters in Christ who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart and who are hungry for more of Jesus.

When Two Agree

Matthew 18:19, *"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."*

How can a Christian read this and not be blown away by what the Lord Jesus said here in this verse of scripture.

Agreement is a principle of life.

In order for two people to agree there must be something outside of them they both touch on. This something outside might be an abstract idea. It might be a goal. It might be a course of action or a decision. But it is something outside which touches both people in the circle.

Why do people agree? Unbelievers agree with unbelievers because of the possibility of personal gain or because they are programmed to believe an idea. These two things control most of what we see in the world: selfishness and propaganda.

Propaganda can be traced back to a group who made an agreement with one another for personal gain. This is why we have propaganda. Someone learned how to manipulate the masses into doing something or believing something which brings gain to those who create the propaganda.

To make this simple: agreement is basic to human life. We cannot live in this world without agreements. The motive is almost always for personal gain or survival.

There is an exception to this. Agreements can also be based upon the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus turned agreement right side up and agreement with him is not based on selfish gain. Instead, agreement with him is based on truth.

People uncover spiritual laws and label them as "seed faith" or whatever. However, when these laws are employed for selfish reasons men return to the world system and act according to the principle of self. Christians who do this are operating according to the world, sin, and self.

I do not say anyone should employ spiritual law for personal gain. I do not think the Lord Jesus taught us to use spiritual law for personal gain. The Lord Jesus did not live for self. He lived for his heavenly Father and poured out his life unto death. The Lord Jesus did not live according to self or use spiritual law for himself.

When people do this they practice witchcraft. People who use spiritual law for self actually are not Christian but satanic. Satan teaches men spiritual law so men will corrupt themselves with self worship.

There is righteous agreement which is with God's kingdom. This agreement comes when two people humble themselves and submit to the Lord Jesus. They see the truth of scripture and understand who the Lord Jesus is and see God's kingdom with spiritual eyes. They will die to self and live for God's kingdom and the gospel.

When people like this gather then the Lord Jesus is there with them and when they agree together it is according to God's will. They do not agree unless they perceive God's will. Their hearts are set on God's will. They do not agree unless they see the will of God. When Christians come together in agreement in the presence of the Lord there is great power for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

We are vessels of honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use. We separate ourselves for God's purpose. We live for the glory of God. When we see a course of action it is because God shows it to us and when we agree it is the confirmation of what the Lord set in place. We can rest assured of this. We have confidence if we ask anything according to God's will he hears us. And when we agree we know we are in God's will.

Agreement based on revelation from God like this is not transient. It is constant. It does not change. The Lord does not change. Years may pass before the fulfillment of God's promise but it will come to pass because God set it in place. It did not originate from us. It came from God and will come to pass.

Here are more scriptures related to this:

John 14:13-14, *"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."*

1 John 5:14-15, *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."*

Matthew Chapter 19

The Pharisees questioned Jesus, not because they sought truth, but because they tried to get him to contradict the law of Moses. They wanted ammunition to use against him. Their questions were designed to trap the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus condescended to answer their questions and in the process taught us a great deal about God's original plan for marriage.

The Lord Jesus returned to Genesis to answer questions from the Pharisees. They asked him about divorce, but he taught them God's plan for marriage. He used the example of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as the ideal marriage which God planned. The Lord made them male and female and those two became one flesh. This is the plan of God for marriage. Anything else is against God and is against nature as God intended. The further away from this people get the more they invite God's wrath and judgment upon themselves.

Once again the Lord Jesus showed he was concerned about children despite the impatience of his disciples. The Lord Jesus blessed the children. This is an example churches follow with the pastor blessing newborn babies in dedication ceremonies.

The account of the rich man and the Lord Jesus was also told in Mark and Luke. Since this was related in three of the four gospels I count it important in understanding who God is. This shows us how the Lord Jesus responded to people who came to him for eternal life and how to truly become a follower of Jesus Christ.

The underlying root problem of the rich man was his money. He obeyed the 10 commandments which deal with the relationship with our fellow man but his problem was money. Money was his idol and his god. This man trusted in his wealth and his money more than he did God.

Money is not every man's problem but it was this man's problem. Some problems a man may have could be drug addiction, or alcohol, or various lusts. This man's specific problem was money. This is a common problem as the Lord Jesus pointed out how difficult it was for people with a lot of money to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The problem with money is the effect on a man. A man who goes through the process of obtaining it in the world system is conformed to idolatry. The love of the money is the root but the problems it produces are pride, covetousness, and idolatry. In order to amass wealth in the world system it is inevitable a man will leave broken lives in his wake. Paul said this problem drowns men in temptation.

I think it is ironic that American Christians desire to acquire as much money as they can. Where can you find Christians who are willing to give up everything in order to follow Jesus?

It may seem impossible that anyone would give up everything they have to follow Jesus but with God all things are possible.

The Lord Jesus promised his disciples that every man who gave up everything to follow him would be rewarded. There is primarily a spiritual reason to give up everything to follow Jesus: eternal life, which is more important than anything a man can obtain in this life.

The Lord Jesus said if we seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness these other material, physical needs are met as a matter of course. We need to keep our focus on following the Lord Jesus and not turn aside to materialism. The enemy is very subtle. He can cause us to covet the stupidest things in order to get us turned aside from following Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Here is an interesting promise the Lord Jesus gave the twelve apostles who left everything to follow him. **Matthew 19:28**, "*And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" This has not yet happened, even now. I think we would know if this had taken place by now. There is still yet a time in the future when there will be twelve tribes in the nation of Israel and each tribe has an apostle sitting on a throne over each tribe.

This is interesting because it reveals God still yet has plans for the nation of Israel. There is an intermingling of the church and Israel but the nation of Israel is still very distinct and separate from the church.

When the Lord spoke to me on August 4 and August 8, 2014 he showed me that as "God is three in one" so also the people of God are "three in one". The people of God are Israel, Church, and the

Kingdom. There are three seasons or periods of time on the earth. The first is Israel, the second is the Church, and the third one is the Kingdom. This is seen by three items within the ark of the covenant: the law, the rod that budded, and the pot of manna. These three are one. (**Hebrews 9:4**)

The twelve thrones for the twelve apostles. That is quite a thought and I think a nice correction for those who think the church replaced Israel. True Christians today have the same faith Abraham had. There is always one true spiritual people of God whose faith rests upon the promise of God which is the Lord Jesus. He is the Seed! He is the Promise. Those whose faith rests upon Jesus Christ alone are the true people of God no matter what season of time they lived in.

Speaking of God's future plan: do people stop and realize that the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven in the book of Revelation has the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon it?

Revelation 21:12, *"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:"*

Does this indicate God has future plans for Israel? I think it does. The church did not replace Israel. We are all one and are those who have the faith of Abraham. In each one of God's three days the outward shell of God's people looks different (Israel, Church, and the Kingdom) but underneath we are the same and are united by faith in the Lord Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 20

The Lord Jesus told a parable which showed what the kingdom from heaven was like. It seemed the fairness in the kingdom from heaven appeared as unfairness depending on the attitude of the one observing the king and the kingdom.

It was not unfair for a man to be generous with his money. However, those who measure according to the principle of self viewed this man's generosity as unfair. Those who saw unfairness interpreted what they saw according to the principle of self. Those who saw generosity judge according to the principle of grace.

There are two ways to live: according to grace or according to the law. Remember: the same measure we use on others is measured to us as well.

This is why I want to live by grace. I do not want to judge according to self interest. I want to discern life by grace. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The Lord Jesus saw what was before him. He spoke of his death and resurrection often but no one understood what he said. I'm convinced the same is true today. World events and Bible prophecy literally scream that the return of King Jesus is at hand but who is listening? Who is paying attention?

The prediction the Lord Jesus made of his death and resurrection were set in contrast to the request of James, John, and their mother.

They did not understand greatness according to the kingdom from heaven. They were programmed to see greatness according to the world system. They thought greatness was reigning over others like Roman kings or religious leaders who created rules to oppress people.

The Lord Jesus made it clear that the kingdom from heaven was the opposite of the kingdom of this world. The kingdoms of this world, as they currently exist, have no part in the kingdom from heaven. In the third day when the Lord Jesus reigns as King over this earth we will see true spiritual authority in government.

Until then we suffer under the oppression of government, business, and society as it is now. This current world system oppresses the spirit in man and exalts the material and physical. This current world system makes men into idolaters who are covetous, full of lust, pride, and murder.

The kingdom from heaven is not like this. In the kingdom from heaven the man who serves and lays down his life is the one who is great.

The Lord Jesus knew this was the future of James and John despite their misunderstanding of what greatness truly was. These men indeed faced tribulation in the world but the Lord Jesus promised the apostles they would one day sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The blind men cried to the Lord Jesus and called him "Son of David". The Lord Jesus responded to their cry and he healed them of blindness.

Matthew 20:25-28, *"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

The Lord Jesus taught on greatness as a result of this mother's request. She approached the Lord Jesus and requested that her sons be at his right and left hands in his kingdom. This occasion provided the Lord Jesus the opportunity to teach what greatness truly meant from the perspective of God and eternity.

My thought here is that the Lord Jesus never rebuked her or her sons for desiring greatness but instead redirected their idea of what greatness was. We should aspire to be great in the kingdom of heaven but we need to understand greatness in God's kingdom is the opposite of greatness in the world system that we currently live in.

The world system creates the illusion of greatness by individuals who lord themselves over others through oppression, manipulation, and deception. This is not difficult for men to do because men who do not believe in God are slaves to self-worship. Every man who is a slave to self-worship desires above anything to exalt himself over others. He is controlled by the lust for prestige, position, pride, and is driven by the desire to compete, win, and overcome other people. The business world and sports world are examples of this.

Government, business, and society are controlled by the serpent poison of self-worship. They make a name for themselves. They create power and authority through making a name and bringing numbers under their name to effect influence and persuasion. This is witchcraft which at its core is control of others in order to exalt self.

Most people who pursue their daily routine in government, business, and society have no idea how united together with Satan they are in principle, goal, and purpose.

Most Christians are blind to this also from what I have seen and my experience. They do not see or understand how the plain word of God applies to their everyday life situations, their relationships with others, and the end-goal of their life pursuit.

If the end goal is self they are not living for the kingdom from heaven. If a man is living solely and completely for self he cannot be a Christian. Unless you deny self you cannot follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore greatness in the kingdom of heaven is servant hood. A man who is great in the kingdom from heaven is a man who puts others before himself. A servant is someone who acts on behalf of others. A Christian's goal is benefiting others. By benefiting others through self-sacrifice and self-denial we indeed serve and follow the Lord Jesus.

We deceive ourselves when our goal in life is money or self-gratification and then we think we are a Christian. We are not Christian if we think and live like this. We follow the natural course of unbelievers united in essence, principle, and spirit with the serpent Satan. **John 8:44**, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*"

It is not hard to discern the children of the devil from the children of God. If you are a child of God it is obvious when you encounter people who follow the devil. The children of the devil worship self. The children of God deny self and worship the Lord Jesus by dying to self and living for others.

Self-help, self-improvement, and any psychology, philosophy, or religion devoted to self in any aspect is influenced by demons. These doctrines of demons the Bible warned us about are rampant in the last days.

Do you want to be great? Then deny self and be a servant. Become a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Matthew Chapter 21

The last part of the journey approached as the Lord Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus moved with determination toward his destiny at the cross. He knew his every action fulfilled the prophecy of the Messiah. He moved toward Jerusalem with the end and a new beginning in sight.

The Lord Jesus no longer told people to be quiet about the fact he was the Messiah. Now everything was done in public. The Lord Jesus allowed the crowd to hail him as Messiah.

The Lord Jesus gave specific instructions to two disciples to obtain transportation for him to enter Jerusalem. The way he chose to enter Jerusalem was fulfillment of prophecy about how the Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a lowly donkey. Matthew made sure we understood this was the fulfillment of prophecy and gave us the exact scripture references.

When people cried out "Hosanna" they were proclaiming the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Perhaps some did this because everyone else did it. Even the children sang his praise on that day.

The next step on entering Jerusalem was that the Lord Jesus cleansed his Father's house of the wickedness of the money changers. This was a public demonstration of his authority as Messiah. He called the temple his own house.

When he finished cleansing the temple then those who needed healing came to him for help.

The cursing of the fig tree was one of two destructive miracles the Lord Jesus did. The other was when he allowed demons to go into a herd of pigs who threw themselves into the ocean.

Some try to draw a parallel between the fig tree and the nation of Israel but scripture says whoever curses Israel will be cursed. I do not believe the fig tree represents Israel because then the Lord Jesus would be cursing Israel. I do not believe this incident represented the nation of Israel rejecting the Lord Jesus.

The disciples were amazed at the miracle of the fig tree but the Lord Jesus taught them if they had faith and did not doubt they could speak to a mountain and it would jump into the sea. Here was the actual lesson of the fig tree. The Lord Jesus taught about faith and that nothing was impossible for him who prayed and believed.

The religious leaders challenged the Lord Jesus but he corrected them. He pointed to his predecessor John the Baptist. He told them the harlots and publicans heard John the Baptist and repented but the religious leaders did not repent. Those who heard John heard what the Lord Jesus said.

In the parable of the obedient and disobedient sons the Lord Jesus made the point that though Gentiles and sinners may not at first obey God when they hear the gospel they eventually repent and turn to God. Many who were great sinners enter the kingdom of God but those who trust in self righteousness remain outside the kingdom.

This points us to what Paul taught in his letters. Paul contrasted the difference between the righteousness of Christ and our self righteousness.

We cannot trust good works or following religious laws to earn righteousness. When we trust in the Lord Jesus we receive the righteousness of Christ.

Salvation is a free gift from God. It is obtained by believing and receiving the Lord Jesus and the work he accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection.

The Lord Jesus warned the religious leaders about what they did. They plotted to kill the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus knew it and told them what they would do through a parable. He said those who fall upon him are broken but those upon whom he fell were crushed to powder. The lesson is that it would be better to come to the Lord Jesus when he offered mercy. If we refuse to come to the Lord Jesus now he promised he would return later and then it will be too late. When the Lord Jesus comes again he brings the wrath of God upon earth.

Matthew Chapter 22

Per the requirement of the religious law a sacrificial lamb needed to be inspected to confirm it had no spot or blemish before being offered. In the same manner, the Lord Jesus was inspected and they found no fault in him. They tried hard to find fault but were unable to do so.

The Lord Jesus told them the parable of the wedding. The master who sent out the invitation for his son's wedding is Father God. He gave an invitation to the nation of Israel by sending his Son to them. Through the gospel accounts we see how the religious leaders rejected the Lord Jesus even though the common people heard him gladly. As a whole Israel rejected their Messiah.

In the parable, the invited guests refused to come to the wedding supper, but instead killed the messengers. This parallels how Israel killed the prophets who were sent to her with God's message. Many times we read how God's prophets were rejected, persecuted, and killed, even up until John the Baptist who was the last of the old testament prophets.

As a result, the master of the wedding supper, the father of the Son, brought his wrath upon them. Also, this began a general invitation to bring in whoever heard the invitation. This reflects the gospel message going to all the world. The Lord Jesus told his disciples to preach the gospel in all the world and to every person after he ascended to heaven. This is what we see happening throughout the book of Acts and beyond.

However, just because a person heard the gospel and went to church does not make him a Christian. There was a man who came to the wedding but did not wear wedding clothes. This is someone who heard the word but did not receive the word into their life to the extent that it changed who they were. They knew about God, the Bible, and probably attended church, but none of this got into their heart or changed who they were. They had selfish interests in mingling among God's people. This man eventually was exposed by the Lord and put out of the fellowship of the true bride of Christ.

The enemies of the Lord Jesus asked him questions in an attempt to trap him. Their trap was to get him to side with Jews or the Romans but the Lord Jesus easily navigated their questions. He told them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's (the coin with Caesar's image on it), but unto God what was God's (man bears the image of God). In his response, no one could trap him and no one could say anything bad about the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus clearly showed believers that they were citizens of another place and our kingdom was not of this current world system. While we are here we submit to the governing authorities in place. This was also the same message the apostle Paul and the other apostles wrote in their letters. A good example is **Romans chapter 13**.

The Sadducees tried to trap the Lord Jesus with a question about marriage and resurrection. The irony here was that these men claimed not to believe in the resurrection or in angels. But the Lord Jesus, in his reply, proved the resurrection in a simple way by using scripture. Scripture calls Jehovah the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The scripture said this in the present tense which means that he is even now the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore these men must be alive. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, therefore these men, even though they died, must be alive in the presence of God. This showed the importance of knowing even the verb tense of scriptures because sometimes a point can be made just by what tense a verb is used in scripture.

The Lord Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment and he easily replied, *"Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself."*

Scripture assumes you already love yourself. Men are lovers of their own selves and that is why we must be told to love our neighbor as we already love ourselves.

Now the Lord Jesus asked them a question. Why does David, speaking by the Holy Spirit, call his son "Lord"? The implication was not only was the Messiah the Son of David, but that he was also the Son of God. They could not or would not answer this question from the Lord Jesus and left him alone.

Matthew Chapter 23

After I read these denunciations against the religious leaders by the Lord Jesus I was inspired to examine my own heart. Do I have these characteristics in my life? Do I want to be seen by men? Do I desire prestige and position? Do I work in order to have a title and be considered "over" my fellow man? What is my goal in life? Do I desire to serve the Lord and my neighbor or do I want to be in control of my life and the lives of others around me?

The Lord Jesus had a list of denunciations and woes for these religious leaders.

He spoke to the people first and said these men sat in the seat of Moses but they did not help the people.

Instead, they actually put burdens on men. The Lord Jesus said they did not lift a finger to help the people upon whom they put these religious burdens.

This was in stark contrast to the Lord Jesus who invited everyone to come to him. The religious leaders put burdens upon people but the Lord Jesus told people that he would lift their burdens.

Matthew 11:28-29, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

The religious leaders put the burden of their wrong interpretation of the law on men, but the Lord Jesus instead invited people to himself. Notice the difference. Religious people have teachings, ideas, and principles; in contrast men filled with the Holy Spirit point to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus revealed the motive behind why these religious men performed their "good works". They performed good works so they would be seen by men. Since their hearts were set on position then their actions needed to be seen by those who could bestow prestige and praise upon them.

These men loved upper rooms and high seats. This is the pride of life, the lust for prestige, power, and position.

Most religious leaders are susceptible to the pride of life. They liked to be called "rabbi". This indicated their desire for titles which elevated them over their fellow man. We should not grasp after titles but instead insist people call us "brother" and not "reverend" or "doctor".

The Lord Jesus explicitly told us not to call men "father" which Catholics do all the time. This should be a clue of how far away from the truth the catholic church is.

The Lord Jesus taught us that whoever exalted himself would be abased and whoever humbled himself would be exalted.

I think humility is a lesson that is lacking in the modern church. Our society is built upon the pride of life and it infects everything from top to bottom.

The church has not escaped the influence of prestige, position, and power. It is seen in the way church buildings erect a platform for pastors to stand on over the rest of the congregation. It is seen in the way religious leaders receive titles, diplomas, or certificates which deceive them and others into thinking that they have more prestige and position than their brothers in Christ.

The Lord Jesus turned his attention now directly to the religious leaders and pronounced woe upon them.

These men prayed long prayers while they cheated widows and orphans. Since we can clearly see how much God emphasizes the widow and orphan throughout scripture it is terrifying to think how far gone these religious leaders were.

These men had serious problems. They focused on things which did not matter while neglecting issues of life which were very important. How often am I also guilty of missing the forest for the trees?

Notice here that toward the end of these woes the Lord Jesus referred to these men as a brood of vipers. This use of the word vipers puts them in the same category as the devil. John the Baptist also denounced these religious leaders as a brood of serpents.

Jerusalem symbolized the leaders of Israel and their rejection of Messiah Jesus. The Lord Jesus said their house was left desolate, and this took place in the years after the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven. In a few years the nation of Israel was scattered, this time by the Romans, and the city of Jerusalem burned down.

However, the Lord Jesus will come back. He said they would see him again one day and they would say "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" I believe this points to the time when the Lord Jesus returns for Israel to rescue her at the end of the seven year tribulation period. At that time the Lord Jesus will set foot once again on the mount of Olives.

Matthew Chapter 24

They left the temple and the disciples pointed to the massive buildings. Perhaps they sensed the finality of what had just happened and were trying to distract the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus used the occasion to describe the end of those buildings and the end of history. What the Lord Jesus said about the buildings unfolded in a few short years when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Sometimes in prophetic scripture one verse leaps hundreds or thousands of years in time between verses. This can happen right in the middle of a verse where there is a comma.

This is the case in these scriptures describing what happened in AD 70 by the Romans and then goes all the way to the end of the church age.

One characteristic of the last days is rampant deception. There is no doubt in my mind that I live in a time of intense delusion and deception. Every time I read a newspaper I do so with the knowledge that everything I am reading is some form of propaganda and lie.

The Lord Jesus described signs of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in various places as the beginning of sorrows. He predicted widespread persecution of Christians. **1 Peter 4:12**, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"*.

Also, the Lord prophesied many believers would be offended and their love for him would grow cold.

During these last days there is a groundswell of false prophets deceiving people. I see this right now with the rise of the prosperity gospel and false faith teaching in America. Also, there are many people attacking the doctrine of the rapture. All these are signs of false prophets and corrupt Bible teaching.

In the middle of the seven year tribulation the abomination of desolation takes place. At this point the great tribulation begins, and events move rapidly in the last 3 1/2 years of the tribulation toward the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

A careful reading of Matthew 24 shows there are two distinct appearances of the Lord Jesus. One is the rapture before the tribulation. The rapture appearance of the Lord Jesus is the one described when one person disappears and one is left. It is a secret appearance of the Lord Jesus when the church is taken out of the world. The other one is at the end of the tribulation when the Lord Jesus is seen by everyone. At the second return every eye on planet earth will see him returning in clouds of glory.

This second coming describes the return of the Lord Jesus at the end of the seven year tribulation period. This return is seen by everyone and is unmistakable.

The Lord Jesus draws a parallel between new growth on a fig tree and world events which indicate the fulfillment of prophecy. When these things are near it is like new leaves on a fig tree which indicates that summer is near. In a similar manner worldwide events which are described in this chapter indicate that the end of the age is near and the beginning of God's kingdom is at hand.

When the Lord Jesus describes no one knowing the day or the hour he is pointing us to his secret return to earth in which the church is snatched out of the world. This is commonly known as the rapture of the church. The original word in Greek is "harpazo", which means "snatching away". Every Christian with this hope purifies his life so he is ready for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. We are exhorted to always be ready for the return of the Lord Jesus.

An evil servant is like unbelievers who complain that God is not bringing history to an end. This man says in his heart, "My lord delays his coming". He does not prepare himself for the return of the Lord. Instead, he lives whatever way he desires. This man is lazy and careless with his life and does not fear the Lord. The Lord Jesus says this man is separated from the true brethren ("cut asunder") and assigned a place with the hypocrites where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This should strike the fear of God into the heart of every Christian.

Luke 21:36, *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

Matthew Chapter 25

Here are two parables which describe our responsibility in light of the return of Jesus. We have a straightforward description of what the Lord will do when he returns. He judges the nations.

It is important to understand that everyone in this group are virgins but this group is then subdivided into two groups called "foolish" and "wise". It is important to keep in mind that this is not comparing two unlike groups but two groups within one larger category. Hopefully I can explain why I think this is important.

It is easy to think that the foolish virgins are false believers or unbelievers. I don't think that is accurate because the entire group is one category. We do not have a comparison here of people in completely opposite categories but people who are alike in everything except one crucial detail.

I don't believe foolish virgins are unbelievers or non-Christians. I believe all of these virgins represent the entire house of faith of professing believers. They all know about the return of Jesus.

In this parable the virgins are separated from one another by one simple fact. Those who are foolish do not bring enough oil with them to endure to the end when the bridegroom arrived.

I sincerely believe there must be a choice made by Christians every single day to wake up and put faith in Jesus Christ. I believe we need to confess Jesus Christ is our Lord every day and proclaim that we are united together with him in death, burial, and resurrection. I believe we must be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. I try to remember every day to ask God to fill me with the Holy Spirit and thank him for putting me in Christ Jesus and uniting me with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

I wonder how many Christians understand the importance of abiding in Christ this way every day. It is easy to move away from Jesus and believe in man-made religions, philosophies, and worldly faith systems. These take us away from simple faith in Jesus.

I think the foolish virgins represent Christians who rely on something other than the Holy Spirit. They do not make it to the end. They do not endure to the end.

I believe the only Christian who is eternally secure is the Christian who today believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. TODAY is the day of salvation! Don't forget this. Anyone who gets off this is in peril.

This is the saving gospel and power of God for salvation. If we get off this gospel we are not secure. Our only security is the Lord Jesus and not confessing a doctrine of eternal security. Our security is in a MAN, not a doctrine or system of faith. Some Christians should repent of putting faith in doctrine rather than in the living God revealed in the Lord Jesus.

The foolish and wise virgins belong to one house of faith. This was not comparing other religions and Christianity. This was Jesus contrasting two groups in the one house of faith.

It is frightening to consider these facts which is probably why I never have heard a sermon on this parable pinpointing this distinction. I never knew this distinction existed until the Lord showed me.

The Lord showed me there is a true remnant in the house of faith. This true remnant of believers are those filled with the Holy Spirit every day and overcome. They do not merely talk about the Bible and doctrines. They don't just talk about God. Instead, they are united with him every day. They truly die to self and lay down their will in obedience to God's word every day. These believers are prepared to humble their heart in order to experience the presence of the living God. They don't want anything fake or phony from religious people and churches. They want to hear the voice of the Lord and are willing to pay the price to know the Lord Jesus in spirit and in truth.

The Lord Jesus told us to count the cost. To follow him costs our life. We must lose our life for the Lord Jesus in order to find eternal life. That is the straight and narrow road men have such a hard time walking. Why is it hard? Mostly because of pride and unbelief.

Note the end result of the foolish virgins. How surprised they must be when they are shut out of the wedding feast. All along they thought they would be in this wedding and at the last minute they are shut out. Why? Because they were not ready. They were not ready because they were not filled with the Holy Spirit. It is as simple as that.

People may say "I know the Lord" but the real question is this: *does the Lord know you?*

I want Jesus to know me. I want him to call my name. I heard him call my name before and I desire with all my heart to hear him call my name again.

To hear his voice is the most wonderful experience a man can have this side of heaven.

Here we see a great danger was not just sins of commission but sins of omission. The Lord Jesus used a parable to describe judgment day for servants of a master. This was a reflection of how things will be one day. There will be judgment and separation.

I don't pretend to understand how this takes place but I believe Christians should cultivate right now a genuine fear of God and look forward to the day of the Lord's return.

Most grab a comforting doctrine to soothe their conscience so they are not concerned about future judgment. However, as with the parable of the ten virgins we need to take into consideration this parable describes one group of people: servants of a master who receive talents to employ. Two of these men did well with the talents given to them; one did not.

There was a discerning between groups based upon what they do or do not do in life within these parables.

Is salvation therefore based on works?

Let me say without any doubt our salvation rests solely upon God's grace and not upon our works.

Let me be quick to add someone who truly believes in the Lord Jesus shows it through his life. This is what the parable tells me. Someone who truly believes is about his Father's business just like the Lord Jesus.

Notice the warnings were directed toward the house of faith and professing believers. The next section, however, turned towards dividing unbelieving nations from those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus gave a clear description of judgment day which befell the nations of the world. I believe this judgment took place at the end of the seven year tribulation and right at the beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ over the earth.

The basis of this judgment was related to how nations treat Christ's brethren. Who are these brethren? It is my opinion these brethren refer to Israel. Therefore this judgment is about how nations treat Israel.

It is very serious how the United States takes a hard stand against Israel. I would not want to be in the shoes of a president who turns this nation against Israel. He is inviting wrath from God upon himself and this nation.

Matthew Chapter 26

The Lord Jesus finished his teaching. This was the end of his teaching ministry and the beginning of his redemption ministry.

"Ye know" the Lord Jesus said to them. The Lord Jesus told them on several occasions what would happen to him. Their minds, however, were filled with their own assumptions and they could not hear what he plainly told them.

It is amazing that the Lord Jesus told his disciples he would be betrayed into the hands of those who wanted to kill him. He assured them he would die but he would rise again and meet them in Galilee. None of them understood what the Lord Jesus said so clearly.

How often do we think we understand what the Lord is doing? How often do we think we understand what is happening? I often say if the Lord Jesus appeared to me and gave me simple instructions I would still mess up. Apparently, I'm the same kind of man these disciples were. They did not understand what the Lord Jesus said. My prayer is that I might grow each day in grace and hear God's word and obey it as these men learned to do.

As soon as the Lord Jesus predicted what would happen we see that his enemies gathered together and plotted how to kill him.

The Lord Jesus predicted his death. A woman came to him at the house of Simon the leper and broke an expensive jar of perfume and anointed him. The disciples were upset with the woman and thought this act of worship was a waste. In other gospels the disciple who protested was Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus. Judas kept the money bag and was a thief the scriptures tell us. He probably wanted the money for himself, even though he spoke about the "poor". Also, it is interesting that the Lord Jesus said what this woman did would always be remembered and included wherever the gospel was preached. Of course, this is true, because we see this included in the gospels and it is often preached on as well.

I wonder if she knew why she poured this perfume on the Lord Jesus? In my opinion she was motivated by love for the Lord Jesus but the Lord stated that what she did was in preparation for his burial.

Immediately after the disciples were rebuked we see the next move Judas made was to betray the Lord Jesus. Perhaps all this talk of dying and burial was the final straw in his mind. Perhaps he thought the Lord had lost his mind. Whatever the motivations it is apparent he cast away any faith he had in the Lord Jesus. He cast in his lot with the enemies of God though he later regretted this.

Judas went to the chief priests and sold himself as a betrayer. He sold himself and the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. From that time Judas looked for an opportunity to betray the Lord Jesus. He did not have to wait long.

When I read these scriptures about Judas betraying the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver I want to search my own heart and ask the question: what would I betray the Lord Jesus for? Would it be money? Would it be love of comfort or pleasure more than God? Would it be because I cannot endure being in a furnace of suffering and so cast away my faith that the Lord is still with me? What would it take for me to throw away my faith in the Lord Jesus and turn my back on him?

I think it is important to ask these questions and not be confident in myself or assume I would never betray the Lord. I am the same as these men. I am no different than Peter or any of the men who ran away.

The Lord Jesus had friends who were not mentioned by name. They reserved an upper room for him. The disciples were instructed where to go and speak to a man. They prepared everything for the Passover. The disciples were participants in preparations but everything was done ahead of time.

A topic at this meal was the Lord's betrayer. It was as if the Lord needed to get this off his heart first. Notice the reaction of the disciples. Each one examined his own heart instead of pointing fingers at others in the room. Each one wondered, "Is it I?"

This is a good question to ask myself on a regular basis. A good prayer is to ask the Lord to put his finger on anything in my heart, character, life, or attitude which might cause me to betray or deny him. I want to be wholehearted in my appraisal of myself. I know I am weak as water. Only by God's grace can I stand with the Lord through the trials in life.

A transformation happened from the Passover to the new way of observing the Lord's supper. This transformation took place because the Lord Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Every lamb Israel sacrificed looked forward to when the Lord Jesus died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. The Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

The Lord Jesus said that the wine is a symbol of his blood of the new testament and the bread symbolized his body given for us. The Lord Jesus invites us to eat and to drink of this bread of life and this living water which is Himself. He doesn't give us abstract principles or ideas to live by. Instead, the Lord Jesus gives Himself. He is the bread. He is the wine. He is everything we need for life, godliness, and for eternal life. The Lord Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through him. (**John 14:6**) There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. (**Acts 4:12**)

The Lord Jesus told them they would be offended and he would be left alone. He said he would die but rise again. He told them he would see them again in Galilee. He told them he would rise again and meet them in Galilee.

Peter expressed his opinion that he was better than the others. He said he would never leave the Lord and would die with him.

We should humble our heart and rely on God's grace to deliver us from temptation. We can do nothing in our own strength.

The Lord Jesus replied to Peter and told him exactly what he would do. He told Peter how many times he would deny the Lord Jesus and that he would do this before the rooster crowed in the morning.

This must have shocked Peter but though the Lord Jesus told him this it still did not prevent Peter from doing exactly what the Lord Jesus predicted.

This account should make us tremble and examine our own lives. Are we so strong? Are we so confident? Peter demonstrated the difference between self-confidence and the reality of failure in temptation. He was a good example and with the help of the Lord we should search our heart. Let us humble ourselves and admit that if not for the grace of God we would do the same thing Peter did. We are no different. We are no better than Peter or any of these disciples who stumbled that night.

At the Garden of Gethsemane the Lord Jesus sought his Father before he was betrayed into the hands of sinners. The Lord Jesus set aside Peter, James, and John to accompany him. Yet even these three chosen

disciples went to sleep. They were unable to keep their eyes open even this close to the end. They slept even as the enemy approached.

I think there are parallels in this account and what happens with the church in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus. There is again this deep, supernatural sleep upon the church. Everyone seems oblivious and blind to an enemy who approaches to kill, steal, and destroy.

When I read this verse "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*" I am reminded that there is no other way for men to be saved. If there was any other way for men to be saved surely God would have allowed it rather than see his only begotten Son crucified. This passage reminds me of how heinous it is when people say there is some other way to God than through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus encouraged his disciples to watch and pray so they would not enter temptation. He said the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. Even here in his darkest hour the Lord Jesus was concerned about his disciples. He thought about their welfare and tried to help them while his own life was in peril.

Always remember that it was not unbelievers who betrayed Christ.

It was a man who spent three years in ministry with the Lord Jesus who betrayed him. It was a man who took part in feeding the multitudes with miraculous bread. It was a man who saw the Lord Jesus walk on water. It was a man who witnessed the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, and the lame walking. It was this man, Judas, who betrayed the Lord Jesus with a kiss.

Notice the Lord Jesus went willingly. He did not resist this arrest but committed himself into the hands of his Father. This was to fulfill prophecy as Matthew pointed out.

What was the crime the Sanhedrin charged the Lord Jesus with? It was the crime of being who he was. He was Christ and He is forever the Christ, the Messiah. He told them he would be seated at the right hand of glory and return in clouds of heaven. After his statement they accused him of blasphemy and condemned him. It is interesting that their conviction of the Lord Jesus as the Christ is a testimony against themselves. In my opinion, I think this was what the Lord Jesus meant when he said to them "Thou hast said". Out of their own mouths they confessed him as Messiah and then rejected him.

They thought they judged the Lord Jesus but it was the Lord Jesus who judged them. He is the final judge of the universe and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. **(Philippians 2)**

Just as the Lord Jesus predicted Peter denied the Lord three times before the rooster crowed. In the end Peter remembered the word of the Lord and cried bitterly for his sin.

Matthew Chapter 27

They tried the Lord Jesus at night and then waited until morning. The motive was unclear why they waited until morning but it was clear that the chief priests and elders had decided to put Jesus to death. There wasn't enough room in the world for them and the Lord Jesus.

Why did they need Pilate? The religious leaders did not have a legal right to put someone to death so they needed the Romans to kill Jesus.

When Judas saw the result of his betrayal he felt remorse. Evidently this was not a remorse in the sense that he repented because the next thing he did was hang himself. He also returned the blood money which the religious leaders then used to buy a cemetery.

Judas saw Jesus condemned. Whatever reason Judas had for his betrayal failed and Judas felt remorse. He did not repent in the same sense that Peter repented. Judas felt a remorse which led him to suicide. The religious leaders were no comfort to his tormented soul.

Pilate was amazed at the response the Lord Jesus made to his accusers, which was to remain silent. It took divine strength to remain silent when people accused him and threatened his life. How difficult it would be for me not to defend myself. It was very hard to do. It was hard to stay silent and allow people to walk over him. I have failed many times in keeping my mouth shut but the Lord Jesus succeeded. Pilate was amazed at him and how he continued steadfastly to submit throughout this fake trial.

What they thought was weakness was really the strength of the Lord Jesus. He answered nothing.

Pilate was struck by the behavior of Jesus. No doubt the innocence of Jesus stood out in stark contrast to the criminals he had judged previously.

Pilate did not want anything to do with the Lord Jesus or with his accusers but he was stuck. He tried to escape a decision by offering the accusers a choice between Barabbas, a murderer, and Jesus. The people chose Barabbas over Jesus.

This was a foreshadowing of how people will choose the Antichrist over the Lord Jesus.

The people demanded that Jesus be crucified and his blood be upon them.

Crucifixion was abhorrent to these people. It was amazing that they not only asked for Barabbas but also demanded the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. The chief priests persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas but something else moved in that crowd when they cried "Let him be crucified".

Pilate washed his hands in water in an attempt to remove his guilt. This could not remove his sin. Pilate was guilty, too. They were all guilty.

In the same way that the Lord Jesus took the place of Barabbas he also takes our place.

The Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of the religious leaders and now suffered at the hands of the Romans.

Pilate handed the Lord Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified. The soldiers mocked Jesus by putting a robe on him and a crown of thorns on his head. They put a rod in his hand and bowed to him and said, "Hail king of the Jews". They spit on him and hit him with the rod then they lead him out to crucify him.

One remarkable fact about the scene of the Lord's crucifixion was the statements people made about him when they mocked him. They clearly testified that it was common knowledge that the Lord Jesus said he was the Son of God. This was a question we need to ask ourselves today, just as others have pointed out: either he is the Son of God or he is not.

When Jesus hung on the cross the soldiers cast lots for his clothes which was a fulfillment of prophecy.

The accusation set over his head: *"This Is Jesus The King Of The Jews"*.

They did not understand why the Lord Jesus came. He did not come to save himself but came instead to save us.

Darkness covered the land and there was an earthquake. The Roman centurion standing there believed and declared, *"Truly this was the Son of God"*.

Joseph of Arimathea received permission from Pilate to remove the body of Jesus from the cross and bury him. Joseph buried Jesus in his own tomb.

It is significant this was a new tomb. There was no other body in the tomb. When the Lord Jesus resurrected there was no mistake who it was that came out of the grave.

The enemies of the Lord knew he said he would rise again the third day. It is interesting they were more alarmed about this than the disciples. As a result they petitioned to have Roman guards seal and guard the tomb until the third day.

This Roman seal and guard ensured it was impossible that the disciples of the Lord Jesus could steal his body. In this way the religious leaders and Romans help solidify the facts surrounding the resurrection of Jesus and provided further proof he was risen indeed.

Matthew Chapter 28

Love inspired the women to travel to the place where their Lord was buried.

I have often reflected on the fact that these women knew this tomb was sealed and guarded by Romans. They knew Joseph closed the tomb when Jesus was laid to rest. Knowing all this what did they think they were doing at the tomb? In other gospels we read that the women prepared spices to anoint his body but how did they intend to get inside the tomb to him? I don't think they considered any of this. In my opinion they were motivated by love in their heart and did not think logically about any of this.

The soldiers were terrified at the sight of angels. There was an earthquake and angels appeared in order to remove the seal and the rock blocking the entrance to the tomb. These angels were there to help the women who arrived at the tomb.

Not only do we have the word of angels but these women also saw that the Lord Jesus was no longer in the tomb. The angels told the women that the Lord Jesus was risen and went ahead of the disciples to Galilee and would meet them there.

As these women rushed back to tell the disciples the good news the Lord Jesus himself met them.

The Lord Jesus greeted them with joy. Notice that the women worshiped the Lord Jesus. He is God. The Lord Jesus is God.

The Roman soldiers who guarded the Lord's tomb went to the religious leaders and reported what happened. Even then, after hearing the report, they were only interested in suppressing the truth about the Lord Jesus.

This was a cover up. The soldiers obviously were confused to seek out the religious leaders instead of reporting to their supervisors. They knew their leaders would execute them for failure in their mission.

"Teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This was the command to make disciples not converts. It is a call to invest our lives in the lives of others in order to share all the Lord Jesus gave us.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark Chapter 1

Quickly we see the Lord Jesus in snapshots: his arrival after John's preparation, baptism, forty days of temptation, calling the disciples, driving out demons, and the message he preached: "Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand! Believe the Good News!" Mark quickly takes us into the action of the ministry of Jesus.

By the end of the first chapter the Lord Jesus was already popular and followed by crowds of people. Most looked for the Lord Jesus to heal them or drive out demonic powers. The demons knew who the Lord Jesus was. They called him "the Holy One of God", but the Lord Jesus commanded them to be quiet. The Lord Jesus did not want any hype from the world. What he was sent to do would be accomplished with no help from the world.

The Lord Jesus was God's servant. We don't learn anything about his virgin birth, genealogy, or his family. We are simply thrust into the action with the baptism of Jesus and the Holy Spirit who drove him out into the wilderness. The Lord Jesus went through forty days of temptation by the devil. It was significant that this testing period lasted forty days. We see this same pattern in scripture with men whom God prepared to serve him.

After the time of testing the Lord Jesus immediately began his ministry in Galilee. He called his disciples and preached in synagogues. Those who heard him were amazed at his authority and especially when he cast demons out of a man in the congregation. So the devil attended church and sat in a pew. These demons would not tolerate the presence of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus drove the demons out. He healed many people of diseases, including Peter's mother-in-law and a leper.

We have an example of the Lord Jesus spending solitary time in prayer with God. The disciples searched for him and told him that everyone looked for him. Instead of enjoying the popularity the Lord Jesus informed them he was leaving for other villages. He went to preach the gospel through the region of Galilee.

In Mark's gospel the Lord Jesus is presented as God's servant. He preached the gospel, healed the sick, and cast out devils. All of this proved he was the Messiah of God which was promised in the Old Testament.

Mark 1:15, *"And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."*

This message is for us today. Let us turn to God in repentance and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's Messiah. He will return again and set up his kingdom on this earth.

The gospel of Mark began with the ministry of John the Baptist. He fulfilled prophecy in Isaiah which pointed to a voice in the wilderness. This voice in the wilderness prepared the way for the Lord. John was a forerunner of the Lord Jesus and prepared men for the arrival of the Messiah. The thrust of John's message was that men should repent immediately because the kingdom was approaching.

We have a physical description of John the Baptist. This was similar to the physical description of Elijah. Both wore leather belts and lived outside the world system. John ate locusts and wild honey. Elijah was fed by ravens and by a widow in Zarephath. Both men were sustained by God. The Lord was their provider. He was their provision. Prophets in the Bible received provision directly from the Lord. They received direct revelation, instruction, and guidance from the Lord. This was the kind of relationship the Lord wanted with everyone in the house of faith. He is the bread of life, he is the living waters, he is the God who holds our hand. However, only a remnant step out in faith and trust the Lord with their lives. They completely stake their name, reputation, and life upon the name of the Lord.

John pointed us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus acknowledged the ministry of John the Baptist. We do not need any confirmation from anyone else except the Lord for our work and ministry. The Lord confirmed John's ministry and pointed out that John did fulfill the work of Elijah's ministry. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. It is interesting how often this was pointed out. However, John the Baptist never did miracles. He only preached repentance and pointed men to the Lord Jesus.

We should follow the example of John the Baptist. We need to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and point men to the Savior. We are ambassadors for Christ with the word of reconciliation. We plead with men to be reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21, *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

Mark 1:9-11, *"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Men who read this verse and deny that God is three in one are beyond my understanding. These verses describe God as three persons in one God. Here we see the Son of God Jesus Christ. Here we see the Holy Spirit who is God. And we also hear the voice of the Father from heaven who is also God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This three in one God is reflected in creation, and is reflected specifically through Israel, Church, and the nations. We see this three in one nature in the roles of prophet, priest, and king. The three in one nature of God was seen in the one ark of the covenant which contained the three elements of the tables of the covenant, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna. (See also **Hebrews 9:4**).

The doctrine of trinity is not a negotiable side issue. If anyone rejects God as three in one they reject the true God. God is three in one. The longer I go on the more convinced I become that those who reject the trinity of God have never met him. If a man meets God he will know who he is. There is no mistake about that.

The Lord Jesus affirmed the truth of God "three in one" in a final instruction to his followers.

Matthew 28:18-20, *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

Mark Chapter 2

The religious leaders tried to bring the Lord Jesus under control. The Lord Jesus explained through his parables that he was new wine which would not be contained by old wine skins. He would not fit into their system of dead religion.

They attempted to prove that the Lord Jesus broke scriptures by his different methods of ministry. They thought he blasphemed when he publicly forgave a man. They criticized him for eating and drinking with sinners. The Lord Jesus was criticized for not fasting like the Pharisees and John's disciples. He was criticized for not observing the Sabbath.

The Lord Jesus did not fit into a religious system. I wonder today how much people try to fit God into a religious system. I wonder if the Lord Jesus walked among us as a visible man if people would criticize him today as he was then.

The Lord Jesus lived in a religious environment where religious leaders controlled everything. The religious leaders did not perform their duties for the benefit of the people. The Lord Jesus described them as putting burdens on people and did not lift a finger to help them. Instead, they operated like the world system. They lorded themselves over people. They loved prestige, position, and power.

The Lord Jesus forgave sins. A man who could not walk was let down on a bed through a roof where Jesus taught. His friends had faith that the Lord Jesus would heal him. When the Lord saw their faith he told the sick man that his sins were forgiven. The religious leaders challenged the authority of the Lord Jesus to forgive sins. The Lord Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked them which is easier: to forgive sins or to heal the man. To prove his authority to forgive he then healed the man. He told the man to pick up his mat and go home. The man was immediately healed, picked up his mat, and obeyed the word of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus called Levi the tax collector as his disciple. During that time the Lord Jesus ate with Levi and Levi's friends who were tax collectors and sinners. The religious leaders used this occasion to accuse the Lord Jesus. In their mind because the Lord Jesus ate with tax collectors then he must be a sinner also. The answer the Lord Jesus gave turned their entire logic on its head. He told them that he did not call the righteous to repent but sinners. This was the job which they, the religious leaders, should have done.

The disciples of Jesus did not fast. This provided the critics of Jesus another opportunity to slander him. However, this also provided the Lord Jesus with an opportunity to reveal himself. He used the picture of the Jewish wedding to describe who he was and who his disciples were in relationship to him. He painted a picture of his disciples as a bride and he was a bridegroom. The true church of Jesus, the remnant of overcoming Christians, is the bride of Jesus Christ.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus did not follow Sabbath rules which the religious leaders created for the people. They picked corn on the Sabbath which broke the man-made religious rules. The Lord Jesus taught us that man is not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man. The Lord Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the fulfillment of this Old Testament shadow. He is our Sabbath. He is our day of rest. He is God's rest for us. We can rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and fulfill the law of the Sabbath. Whenever I hear men who try to bring others into the bondage of Sabbath day keeping I know they are deceived and deceiving other people. They do not understand what Christ did for us in his death, burial, and resurrection.

I am thankful for all of these examples of the Lord Jesus correcting the religious leaders. It provides us with a good understanding of how to avoid religious traps in churches and around religious people.

Mark Chapter 3

What stands out to me was when the Lord's family thought he was out of his mind in verse 21. Why did his family think that? He explained that his real family were those who obeyed God's will. The Lord Jesus considered his earthly family of secondary priority to his spiritual family. How true this was in my life! Many times I had closer fellowship with Christians than I did with my natural family!

Crowds grew larger as they followed the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus appointed twelve apostles to help him. This reminds me of how God told Moses to choose tribal leaders to help govern Israel. I think it is

a good idea when a Christian leader shares responsibility in ministry with other mature Christians. This was what Paul did when he appointed elders in churches. This was the case in the early church when they chose seven men to wait on tables. Everybody had a job to perform.

Mark 3:35, "*For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.*"

The Lord Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day and was hated by the religious leaders. When the Lord Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day the religious leaders were so angry they discussed how they might destroy him. They understood that he did not fit into their religious world system. Yet he obviously expressed authority which they did not have. He healed people and cast out devils.

They accused Jesus of casting out devils by the power of the devil.

The Lord Jesus replied to this accusation with simple logic. How can Satan cast out Satan? Every house divided against itself cannot stand.

Here we see that the Lord Jesus taught that Satan does have a kingdom of devils and demons. The devil is the head of an evil house.

The Lord Jesus warned them not to accuse him of casting out devils by the power of the devil. His critics were close to an unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

When men reject the work of the Holy Spirit there is no hope left for salvation.

While the Lord Jesus taught this crowd then someone else informed him that his family looked for him. Notice the Lord's reply when they told him that his family looked for him. The Lord Jesus said that those who hear God's word and obey it were his family. Those who hear and obey God were his brothers, and sisters, and mother. The family of the Lord Jesus are those who hear and obey God's word. The Lord Jesus said if a man loved him then this love could appear as hatred toward family members sometimes.

Luke 14:26, "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" Our love for the Lord Jesus will at certain times make it seem to the world as if we hate our families.

It is difficult and takes the power of the Holy Spirit to obey the Lord Jesus when it appears to others that by obeying him we hate our family.

The most loving thing we can ever do for family is love the Lord Jesus first. We must love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This love is sometimes a correction to family and friends. A life of consecration is a correction to those who do not follow the Lord Jesus. They will think we hate them. They will think we are judging them or that we hate them. I know this from experience, believe me.

In reality we do indeed love our family but we love the Lord Jesus first and we love the Lord Jesus more. By loving the Lord Jesus we do what is best for them. By allowing Jesus Christ to shine through us we show God's love.

Proverbs 27:5-6, "*Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*"

Mark Chapter 4

The Lord Jesus taught several parables. I won't cover the meaning of these parables because what caught my attention was this: "*The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables...*" [verse 11] Also verse 34, He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples he explained everything.

It was better to have the Lord Jesus than to have his parables. Those who had the Lord Jesus had his word, his teachings, parables...everything. Many people had his parables and teachings. It is possible some of these people took his parables and created a religion. But they didn't have the Lord Jesus himself.

I would rather have the Lord Jesus. I would rather sit with the Lord Jesus even in silence. I would rather be with the Lord Jesus than have the mystery of the universe explained.

I'm not diminishing Bible study, doctrine, or teaching. I'm saying that without the presence of the Lord Jesus all these things become external religion.

The Lord Jesus explained why he spoke in parables when there were crowds of people around.

Not everyone in the crowd believed what he said. By speaking in parables he invited those who wanted to know more to come closer. But those who did not believe would assume he told them children's stories. In this way the Lord showed mercy to those who did not believe. It is one thing to turn away from a story but it is another to turn away from the truth spoken plainly.

The more truth we hear the more we are accountable. The Lord showed mercy to those who did not believe. The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked or the punishment they receive. He shows mercy in every way possible even when he taught them what would save them if they would believe. Men have free will and must choose to believe. God does not force anyone to believe and trust in him.

These were parables which described the kingdom of God. His first parable was about sowing seed into different kinds of soil.

The Lord explained the seed was the word of God. Birds who ate up the seed sown by the wayside represented Satan and demons.

The seed which fell in rocky soil represented a man who heard the word of God gladly but quickly fell away when tested.

Another type of soil was burdened with thorns. This was the man who heard God's word but the cares of life, riches, and pleasures choked the word of God and he was unfruitful.

Finally, the good soil represented men who received the word of God into a good heart and who bore fruit in various degrees of success.

The Lord Jesus compared the kingdom of God to crop growth. A man planted his seed in the ground, and then God caused the harvest. When the harvest came then the sickle was put in and the fruit was gathered.

He also compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed which was planted in the ground. However, this mustard grew into a monstrous tree which was so large that birds roosted in its branches. In the first parable birds represented the servants of Satan so we understand this tree grew to an abnormal size and provided a place for the workers of Satan. This is what we see in mega churches today.

The Lord Jesus told his disciples to get into a boat and travel to the other side of the lake. While the Lord Jesus slept in the boat a storm arose which was so fierce the disciples feared for their lives. They awoke the Lord Jesus and he spoke to the wind and waves and it was calm. They were amazed and wondered what kind of man commanded the wind and the waves to obey him!

The Lord Jesus asked them a piercing question at that moment: "*And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*" (**Mark 4:40**)

Fear of death will not accompany faith in God. Those who fear have not kept their mind fixed on our loving heavenly Father. The Lord is our provider, our protector, and he is our portion.

Isaiah 26:3, "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*"

Mark Chapter 5

There was a demon-possessed man who lived in the region of the Gadarenes. This was an area populated by Gentiles. This account of the demon possessed man in the Gadarenes is the most descriptive and graphic account in the Bible of someone tormented by demons. Here was a man with a legion of demons. Those demons drove the man crazy. He lived among the tombs and cut himself with stones. He did not wear any clothes and could not be restrained by neighbors. We don't know how the man got into this situation but we know how he escaped.

The Lord Jesus showed up and immediately the man ran to meet him. The demons knew the name of the Lord Jesus and they knew he was the Son of the most high God. They pleaded with him not to torment them or send them away. The demons recognized the Lord and pleaded with him that he would not send them into the abyss. The abyss was where evil spirits were confined. They suggested that he allow them to go into a herd of pigs nearby. I don't think the Lord Jesus showed mercy to these demons by sending them into the pigs. The Lord cast the demons out of the man and they went into the pigs which then turned around and threw themselves off a cliff and into the sea. Not even the pigs could tolerate the demons.

The man was set free from what could have been as many as 6,000 demons. A Roman legion was 6,000 soldiers, so we can assume that was the number of demons which possessed the man. The demons tortured and tried to obliterate the image of God in the man.

Once the man was free he wanted to follow the Lord Jesus. He begged the Lord Jesus to allow him to go with Him. The Lord Jesus did not permit him but instead told him to go home and tell his family what the Lord had done for him.

Perhaps the Lord Jesus knew this man was a father and his children needed him. Maybe he had a wife who needed him. Maybe he had aging parents who needed him. Perhaps the proof of divine intervention in his life would be a testimony to his family and bring them to God. Or perhaps, after being tormented for so long the man was simply unable physically or mentally to deal with the stress of discipleship.

I can relate to this account in a lot of ways. The Lord interrupted my life when I was a young man in a similar manner. I don't think I was as far gone as this man but certainly I was headed in the same direction. The Lord stopped me and delivered me from demons of drug addiction, alcoholism, and all manner of evil in my life.

I know I was set free from demons just like this man because I changed immediately when the Lord touched me. When the Lord filled me with the Holy Spirit I changed instantly like someone had turned on a light switch. I still had plenty of emotional issues to work through for years, but the immediate transformation in my life was profound. The devil will stunt a man's maturity so he can't learn and grow and mature. It took several years of catching up before I could stand on my own two feet in life. Perhaps this was why the Lord told this man to just go home and share with others his testimony.

Another important thing to notice here is that the Lord Jesus exposed the name and activity of these demons. The Holy Spirit taught me a lesson about names and numbers. The world system works by creating a name and bringing numbers underneath it to produce power, prestige, and position. This is how evil spirits in the world system operate.

This was how these demons worked to destroy this man. When the Lord exposed the name and numbers of these evil spirits it reminds me of the account of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Those people at the tower of Babel said that they wanted to make a name for themselves. Instead of scattering all over the earth they wanted to concentrate their numbers in one place. By concentrating their numbers under a name they created power, position, provision, and protection.

This is exactly the same method which every corporation and business and government uses today. They create a name. Then they build power under a name through numbers of people.

When the Lord Jesus exposed these demons he exposed the work of the principalities and powers of darkness and how they operate. (See also **Ephesians chapter 6**).

When the Lord Jesus returned across the lake he was approached by a synagogue ruler whose daughter was dying. He asked Jesus to come and heal her. As the Lord Jesus was on his way to help this synagogue ruler another woman touched the Lord's garment and was immediately healed from her sickness of bleeding.

By the time he arrived the girl appeared to be dead but the Lord Jesus said she was only sleeping. When Jesus raised the girl he took with him Peter, James, and John and the girl's parents.

Mark 5:41-42, *"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."*

Notice that when the Lord Jesus spoke his word that the dead girl rose immediately from the dead. The results were immediate and profound.

We know from other scripture that death for Christians is often referred to as sleeping because it is not a permanent situation. This is how the Lord works in those he raises from spiritual death.

This reminds me of another scripture: *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"* (**Ephesians 2:4-5**) We are made alive by the Holy Spirit of God. We are raised from being dead in sins, and made alive with Christ!

Mark Chapter 6

The true identity of the Lord Jesus became an issue. Some people in his hometown thought that he was a carpenter. King Herod supposed Jesus was John the Baptist. Herod was superstitious and believed John had come back to haunt him since Herod beheaded John. The crowd that followed him were happy that he handed out free food. They were not interested in who he was as long as they were fed.

The Lord Jesus sent out the twelve and gave them authority to preach and drive out demons. From this experience they should have known who he was. When he walked on the water they thought he was a ghost.

Who is Jesus? This is the question every person will face one day. *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (**Philippians 2:9-11**)

The Lord Jesus went back to Nazareth. The people in Nazareth were offended by his ministry. They said they knew everyone in his family. Who did he think he was? People today act like this still. It is especially heartbreaking when family and friends reject a man's ministry. The Lord Jesus could not do much because of the unbelief in these people. The Lord Jesus was unable to do much because of unbelief in people. This shows us that we should always walk in faith and completely cast ourselves upon God to intervene in our lives. We need to exercise our faith and reach out to the Lord Jesus expecting that he can help us.

The Lord Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples and gave them authority. He gave detailed instructions on what to bring and not to bring on their journey. They were in a ministry where they lived by faith in regard to provision. If their ministry was rejected the Lord Jesus told them to knock the dust off their sandals on the way out of town. Notice how specific were the Lord's instruction to his

disciples in ministry. In the context of that specific time period the Lord gave them a list of things to do, not do, to carry, to not carry, and how to respond to rejection.

The Lord also wants to give us instructions for living the Christian life today. There are specific boundaries for ministry which we need to learn and adhere to in relating to people.

King Herod thought the Lord Jesus was John the Baptist reincarnated. We see this superstition of reincarnation is nothing new. All of these superstitions and fables we hear today are nothing new. Nothing is new under the sun. Unbelievers always find a way to pervert truth according to their guilty consciences.

Herod murdered John the Baptist. John was beheaded in prison because of the manipulation of seducing women.

The apostles report back to the Lord Jesus and he instructed them to take time off to rest. It was refreshing to see here how the Lord was as concerned for rest as he was for work. The Lord Jesus led them to take rest but the crowd followed them and they had little time for a break. The Lord Jesus had compassion on the crowd. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

The Lord Jesus challenged the disciples to meet the physical need of the crowd. They brought him some pieces of bread and fish. The Lord Jesus took the little they had, some bread and fish, and fed the multitude. Twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered after everyone was full.

This miracle of feeding five thousand was recorded several times in the gospel accounts. The Lord fed people with bread like he did with Israel in the wilderness. To Israel he gave manna from heaven. Here he fed the people with bread. The point is that the Lord himself is our provider. We are deceived if we believe we provide for ourselves. Any job the Lord allows us to have is a gift from him. The Lord assigns us our tasks. Let us work with all of our heart for the Lord and not for men. It is the Lord who rewards us for faithful labor. The Lord is our rewarder.

Hebrews 11:6, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

Colossians 3:23-34, *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."*

The Lord Jesus instructed his disciples to take the boat and cross the sea. He sent away the crowd and sought isolation so he could pray. Later he went out to the disciples walking on the water. Peter's walking on the water is missing in the account of Mark. Perhaps this is because Peter was influential in the writing of this gospel account.

The crowd continued to find the Lord Jesus on the other side of the sea.

Mark Chapter 7

The religious leaders tried to correct the Lord Jesus. They said his disciples did not follow the religious traditions of washing hands before eating. The Lord Jesus turned the tables on them and corrected them for following the traditions of men rather than God's commandments.

The religious leaders worried because the followers of Jesus did not wash their hands. This was in violation of their religious tradition and so they attacked the Lord Jesus because he did not follow their religious rules.

The Lord called them hypocrites and quoted scripture to point out their hypocrisy.

He then went in-depth to explain the difference between external religion of self-worship and what really makes a man unclean.

The Lord Jesus said it wasn't what we eat or what we don't eat that has moral importance. What is important is what is in a person's heart. What comes out of a man's heart is what defiles the man.

By saying this the Lord Jesus declared all foods were clean for us to eat. It is important to remember this because most cults will eventually get into dietary rules and laws.

After the Lord Jesus corrected the religious leaders his disciples asked for an explanation. He explained that what a man ate did not make him unclean but what was in the heart made a man unclean. This showed the difference between external religion and a true relationship with God from the heart. Many people pretend to love God by acting religious but their heart is far away from God. This was a fulfillment of what Isaiah wrote: *"This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."*

This issue was further expounded on by Paul in **Romans 14**.

In contrast to the religious leaders who criticized the Lord Jesus there was a Gentile woman who came to him and asked for help. It appeared as though the Lord Jesus was tough on her but he still granted her request because she didn't give up. Perhaps this was also a lesson for his Jewish disciples that God loves Gentiles, too?

The Gentile woman asked for help from Jesus for her demon possessed daughter. Some might think that the Lord Jesus was cruel to the woman. Knowing the Lord Jesus from all of the gospel accounts and how many times he was moved by compassion, however, we know the Lord Jesus was not cruel to this woman. His response was designed to draw out faith and demonstrate to his Jewish disciples that Gentiles also have faith in God and receive salvation from God.

The Lord Jesus used creative ways to heal people. Here he used a little spit to heal a deaf-mute.

The Lord Jesus healed the deaf mute man. The Lord Jesus put his fingers in the man's ears, then spit, and touched the man's tongue with his finger. In this way the man could hear and his tongue was loosed so he could speak.

The detail in the description of the Lord Jesus healing this man is further proof that this was a historical account of what the Lord Jesus did. All the scriptures are inspired by God and are true. We can put our complete trust and faith in these gospel accounts of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark Chapter 8

Yeast represented the mixing of sin and unbelief with external religious practice in contrast to a heartfelt faith and obedience to the Lord.

The disciples saw powerful miracles the Lord Jesus did such as the feeding of thousands with only a few loaves and fish. However, they had difficulty applying the truth behind these miracles to their lives.

The parting of the Red Sea did not leave an impression on Israel (at that time) to inspire faith. If one doesn't believe God's Word one will not be convinced even if a miracle such as resurrection from the dead happens.

Human sin is so deceitful it conjures explanations for anything miraculous. Yet at the same time men lust after the supernatural.

Peter understood the Lord Jesus was the Messiah but he did not understand the mission of Christ. The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter when he suggested an alternate way to God's plan of salvation. This was similar to the verse that Moses knew God's ways but Israel only knew God's acts.

The Lord Jesus knew where he came from and where he was going. He set his face like flint towards Calvary, regardless of the opinions of family, his disciples, his critics: he set his face like a flint towards Calvary to obey and fulfill the plan of his Heavenly Father.

Mark 8:34-35, *"Then Jesus called the crowd to himself along with his disciples and told them, If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow me continually, because whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it."*

The Lord Jesus fed people with bread and fish. He blessed the food and it multiplied to feed thousands of people. Later he warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the religious leaders. They misunderstood and thought he talked about literal bread. He rebuked them for thinking like this especially in light of the fact that he created miraculous bread to feed thousands of people in front of them.

This demonstrated the depravity of unbelief in the heart of men. Even those who were eye witnesses to miracles had problems with unbelief in their heart. This proved that a miraculous sign does not convince people of the truth.

I am reminded of how I should keep quiet about miracles in my own life. When people do not believe me I am putting them in a position of accountability they may not be ready for. I am reminded I should only preach the gospel to people and not share events in my own life. The Lord does not take lightly the unbelief of people in the face of seeing or hearing of miracles.

Here again I am reminded of the foundational doctrine of denying self. The Lord Jesus told us again that a Christian must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. We cannot follow our own self and follow Jesus at the same time. Following Jesus means we forsake our own lives. Each person must be taught by the Holy Spirit how this applies in their own personal situation. If we receive the love of the truth then we will be taught by the Holy Spirit to deny our self and follow Jesus. To follow Jesus is to imitate what he did. What did Jesus do? He did not do anything in his own name but he did everything in the name of his Father.

In the same way we do not promote ourselves but instead do all in the name of the Lord Jesus and for the glory of God.

If a man attempts to preserve his life he will ultimately lose it. We cannot create our own life. We are not God no matter what the world tries to tell us. We are God's creation. When we offer ourselves completely to God then we find the true purpose and meaning of life. We are created to serve God, worship God, and lay down our life for his kingdom.

Mark Chapter 9

Could it be possible the Heavenly Father allowed this transfiguration to encourage the Lord Jesus? It seemed that shortly thereafter he was very focused on what was coming up. He told his disciples point blank what would happen. He told them he would be betrayed and killed and rise again the third day. They did not understand what the Lord Jesus said and were afraid to ask.

The Lord Jesus cast another demon out of a boy. The boy's father admitted his doubts to the Lord Jesus, but then said, "I believe, help my unbelief!" How much like myself! I can relate to this guy.

The disciples caught somebody attempting to drive out demons. He was not within the inner circle of the disciples so they tried to stop him.

The Lord Jesus told his disciples if someone did something positive in his name then they couldn't turn around and say something critical of the Lord Jesus. He said "whoever is for us cannot be against us". I wonder how I can be apply that in my life?

The Lord Jesus warned his disciples about the dangers of hellfire and the consequences for offending one of the little ones. Perhaps the little ones were new disciples or baby Christians?

Mark 9:2-3, *"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."*

The Lord Jesus took certain disciples with him into a high mountain. Peter, James, and John went with him, and the Lord Jesus was transfigured. What does "transfigured" mean?

The Lord Jesus was changed. He was transformed. His appearance revealed the kingdom of God to the disciples. He said earlier that some would see the kingdom of God. This transfiguration was in some way a revelation of the kingdom of God.

He was described as wearing clothes which were whiter than anyone on earth could make them. No bleach could make his clothes that white. It was a purity and a holiness this earth cannot reproduce.

Why did the Lord allow the disciples to see him like this? They also heard the voice of Father God which said that the Lord Jesus was his son in whom he was well pleased. His command was to hear what Jesus spoke. We were commanded to listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus.

Peter later reflected back on this experience in his epistle.

2 Peter 1:16-18, *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."*

One important idea we can take from the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus is the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is God the Son. This is a fact about the Lord Jesus which is attacked by the enemy but it is the fact which sets the Lord Jesus apart from everyone else. He is the Son of God. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through the Lord Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6**). He is the express image of God. He is the revelation of God. Jesus Christ is God.

Colossians 1:15-19, *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;"*

Colossians 2:9, *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."*

God is three in one. He is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Mark Chapter 10

The Lord Jesus corrected people on several areas and situations which arose as they traveled. These subjects included divorce, God's attitude toward children, and those things which hinder a person from having a right relationship with God.

The Lord Jesus said divorce was wrong and said in the beginning God created a man and a woman to be together for life. There was no divorce in God's plan for the family. Divorce was a result of the hardness of the heart of man.

The Lord Jesus loved children and did not stop them from approaching him. This was encouraging to me to know that one can approach the Lord Jesus without fear of rejection.

Some people believe you can say a prayer and are saved but the Lord Jesus dealt with the obstacles in a young man's life which prevented him from a right relationship with God. The obstacle in this particular man's life was money. This is a common obstacle in many lives. (1 Timothy 6).

The Lord Jesus again prophesied what would happen to him. He described his crucifixion, death, and resurrection. They did not understand.

Contrast the Lord's attitude of humility, being a servant, and a suffering Savior with the attitude of the disciples who argued about who was the greatest and who would have seats of power at the Lord's left and right hand in his kingdom.

The Lord Jesus was merciful and healed a man who was blind.

Mark 10:47-48, *"And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."*

When dealing with religious leaders the Lord Jesus used their law and provided them the correct interpretation and application of it. The disciples said they left everything to follow the Lord Jesus. The Lord promised they would be rewarded.

There was a man who cried out to the Lord Jesus for mercy. He knew who the Lord Jesus was. He called the Lord Jesus *"thou Son of David"*. He knew the Lord Jesus was the Messiah and if he could only get the Lord's attention he could be healed.

He cried out to the Lord Jesus and the crowd told him to be quiet but he cried out louder. The Lord Jesus heard his cry and asked him what he wanted. He said he wanted to see. The Lord Jesus spoke a word and the man received his sight. The Lord Jesus said to him, *"Go thy way thy faith hath made thee whole."* The Lord Jesus gave him permission to go his way but the man followed the Lord Jesus after he received his sight.

Who is the Lord Jesus? It is important everyone knows who he is. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the King of the Jews, the King of all the nations. He will return to this earth and reign over all the nations. He is the judge of all men. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Mark Chapter 11

The Lord Jesus went to Jerusalem and Calvary. Up until this specific time whenever the Lord Jesus healed people he told them not to tell others. He kept things private as possible and seemed to move around undercover when he could. He didn't want to attract attention. Now this changed as he headed toward Jerusalem and Calvary.

The common people and children were happy to hail him as the King and Messiah. They sang his praises as he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The Lord Jesus went into the temple and cleansed it. He taught his disciples that in order to accomplish anything with God that a person must have faith and must be in a right relationship with God and man. Forgiving people is basic to faith in God.

Mark 11:22, *"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God."*

While he traveled the Lord Jesus cursed a fig tree which had no fruit. Later the disciples noticed the tree was dried up and were amazed at how quickly the tree had died. When they brought this to the attention of the Lord Jesus he replied, "Have faith in God." He explained to them that if they had faith then what they said would be done. He described the authority a faith-filled believer has to create change in the world. He tied this to a right relationship with people and God. We cannot separate faith in God from a right relationship with people. Both go together.

Today men have faith in many things. Some believe in philosophy, science, or world religions. Some boast in an absence of faith. Men put their heart and energy into self worship. This is the essence of sin – worship of self – and being conformed to the world system. In principle this is living in agreement with the devil. When men do not put faith in God they put faith in themselves which leads to existing like Satan. Satan only worships self. This is what men do when they do not put their faith in God.

The Lord Jesus did not teach us to put faith in faith itself. Some have taught that as long as you have faith it does not matter what the object of your faith is. This is a spiritual disaster because God has made man in such a way that man becomes like whatever he worships. When men worship worthless objects they become worthless. Another word for worthless in the Bible is "reprobate".

The Lord Jesus Christ is God and He is Man. He is the God Man. He became a man to save us from ourselves, from sin, from this world, and from the devil. He redeemed us with his blood which he shed upon the cross. He died, was buried, and rose again the third day. All those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus are united with him and become one with him in death, burial, and resurrection. We become a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things pass away and all things become new.

Mark Chapter 12

The Lord Jesus told a parable the Pharisees could understand. It was a parable that they guessed correctly that the Lord Jesus implied that they were villains. The villains in the story were thieves and murderers and this was what the Lord Jesus thought about the religious leaders.

The religious leaders had some trick questions for the Lord Jesus. They questioned the Lord Jesus about paying taxes. Perhaps they would catch him between legal obligation to the government and the resentment felt among the people toward the Romans. They thought they could make him either a tax-evader or force him to lose favor with the crowd.

Of course, the trick did not work. The Lord Jesus said, *"Render unto Caesar's what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's."* The coin was made in Caesar's image but man was made in the image of God. This reply surprised them and it made the common people rejoice because of him.

Next they asked the Lord Jesus a hypothetical question. An imaginary scenario was created by the questioner regarding marriage and resurrection. The Lord Jesus said they did not know the Bible or the power of God. The Lord Jesus reaffirmed that there will be a resurrection.

Another question put to Jesus: what was the greatest commandment? After he answered this it appeared the questioner only halfheartedly tried to trick the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus gave him a compliment. Perhaps this was a sincere question from that man.

The Lord Jesus asked the final question: whose son is the Christ? This question seemed easy but when they gave their reply the Lord Jesus asked a follow-up question: "David himself calls him 'Lord'. How then can he be his son?"

The Lord Jesus commended a poor widow's offering. This shows God is always mindful of the smallest sacrifices we make. He remembers the good we do even if we give a cup of cold water to one of his disciples.

The Lord Jesus told a parable against the religious leaders. In turn they tried to trap him with religious questions about paying taxes, marriage, the resurrection, and the greatest commandment. The Lord Jesus answered all the questions and asked them a question.

The question the Lord Jesus asked them pointed to the Son of David as the Son of God. How can David, in the Spirit, call his son "Lord"? The only answer was that the Son of David was also the Son of God. These religious leaders were unable to accept this.

This is where religious people, false religions, and unbelievers attack. They attack the fact that the Lord Jesus is both fully man and fully God. If the Lord Jesus were not God he would not be sinless. If he were not sinless he could not have been the Lamb of God who took away our sin. However, we know the scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and is completely sinless.

Mark 1:1, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, **the Son of God**;*"

Mark 15:39, "*And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was **the Son of God**.*"

John 9:35-38, "*Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on **the Son of God**? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and **it is he that talketh with thee**. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he **worshiped** him.*"

1 Peter 1:19, "*But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb **without blemish and without spot**:*"

Hebrews 4:15, "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, **yet without sin**.*"

All the questions the religious leaders asked were hypocritical. They did not ask questions to find the truth but instead to trap the Lord Jesus in his words so they would have a reason to accuse him.

The Lord Jesus told his disciples to beware of the religious leaders and not to follow their example.

Mark Chapter 13

The disciples thought the buildings were a big deal and pointed it out to the Lord Jesus. His reply was that all the buildings would be destroyed. This inspired the disciples to think about about the end of the world because they questioned him about this.

The Lord Jesus responded to them and went into great detail. Some things he covered included symptoms of the last days and important facts about the end days.

The Lord Jesus warned there would be much deception. People would claim they are "I AM" which was the Hebrew term for Yahweh or God. Sadly, this is happening now in the word of faith cult with people like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others in this movement calling themselves gods. This points back to the garden of Eden when Satan told Eve she could be a god if she ate the fruit. Many people try to ascend to their "higher selves" and achieve "godhood". Mormonism is an example, as is the New Age movement, along with the Word of Faith cult. Joel Osteen said Mormons are Christians. Of course he does. They believe the same fundamental thing that men are gods. They believe they can speak things into existence with positive confession. This is witchcraft. These people in the word of faith cult are as Satanic as Joseph Smith and the Mormon church.

The Lord Jesus warned the disciples that following Christ would not be easy. It never was easy to be a Christian because the world hates true Christians. The Lord Jesus told us this ahead of time. In the last days it is especially terrible and the Lord Jesus warned because of Christian persecution that doors would open for us to be a witness to the world.

There is also many signs surrounding the end of the world such as earthquakes, famines, and wars. What century has ever seen as much war as last century, during the 20th Century, when we saw two world wars, and countless smaller wars that happened. I've heard there are now more earthquakes than ever before and that the weather is changing rapidly. There are specific signs that take place immediately before the second coming of Christ which include stars falling out of the sky and the heavens being shaken.

The Lord Jesus said there was no use trying to figure out the day or the hour when all this would happen. It is best to always be ready and to live in view of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he comes there won't be time to get ready so you must get ready right now.

The Lord Jesus said in **verse 31**, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*" Amen, forever, oh Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Mark 13:5, "*And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you.*"

When the Lord Jesus described the end of the age and the last days he warned his disciples not to be deceived. He said to them to take heed lest any man deceive you. One of the signs which show we are at the end of the age is mass deception and delusion.

The Lord Jesus described events which could be interpreted happening in AD 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. There was no abomination of desolation in AD 70. That happened between the Old Testament and the New Testament before Christ was born. Antiochus Epiphanes erected an abomination of desolation in the temple which led to the Maccabean revolt during the history of the Jews before Jesus was born. How could Jesus speak of a past event as something yet in the future?

To understand this we have to view prophecy in the same way the Hebrew mind views prophecy.

In the Hebrew mind prophecy is a pattern in history. In the Greek mind prophecy is like fortune telling: an event is predicted and happens.

In the Hebrew mind prophecy is seeing a pattern of God in history and knowing it will happen in the future based upon seeing the pattern of God and knowing the character of God.

No one ever saw the pattern of God better than Jesus Christ. He clearly saw a time which would be like what happened with the previous abomination of desolation in the temple. A time of great evil would come again upon the Jewish people in the last days.

What the Lord Jesus described here pointed to a period of time which was also known as Jacob's trouble, or the Great Tribulation.

He concluded by saying to be watchful for the return of the Lord Jesus. When he returned it would be in the same way he ascended to heaven. Don't believe false prophets who claim to be the Messiah. In the last days many will be deceived by supernatural powers which liars use to deceive people.

The Lord told us how things will be so we can prepare. The Lord's people are not in darkness but they are of the light. Therefore let us wake up to the day in which we live. We should not to be afraid but prepare ourselves for the return of the Lord Jesus. Be alert and always keep on watching for the return of the Lord Jesus.

Mark Chapter 14

Mark 14:27-28, *"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."*

In this chapter the Lord Jesus was betrayed by Judas, he was arrested, and he was denied by Peter.

The Lord knew these things would happen before they happened. He prophesied about the betrayal of Judas and the denial by Peter. He told them he would be taken, that he would die, and that he would rise again. He told them he would go before them into Galilee.

They did not believe him. Judas did not think that what he did was betrayal at that moment. Peter did not believe he would deny Jesus. None of them believed the Lord Jesus would die. None believed that he would rise again and go before them into Galilee. Yet everything the Lord Jesus said would happen did happen just like he said it would.

God's word is filled with prophecy about what is happening in our world around us at this moment. The Bible is filled with prophecy about the rapture of the church, the seven years of tribulation, the rise of the man of sin, the second coming of Jesus Christ. When people believe in God's word they can see these things taking shape in the world all around us.

The disciples knew that something sorrowful was happening. They saw the Lord Jesus mourn in the garden of Gethsemane. A supernatural weariness came upon them and they were unable to keep their eyes open while the Lord Jesus walked through this final trial by himself. The Lord Jesus urged them to watch and pray.

This scene in the garden of Gethsemane is replaying again today in the church. There are incredible prophecies coming to pass in our time and yet for the most part the church is asleep. They do not see what is happening right now. The Lord Jesus urges us to watch and to pray. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

The religious leaders were determined to kill the Lord Jesus. His trial did not prove that the Lord Jesus was guilty of anything but what he always said. He was the Son of God. For this statement the religious leaders said he was a blasphemer and worthy of death. However, the Lord Jesus did not blaspheme. He told them the truth. He told them exactly what would happen. For this they were ready to kill him. Instead of believing in God's word they followed the work of the devil and allowed murder to enter their hearts. The story of Cain and Abel is repeated over and over.

The same is always true. When men do not believe in God their hearts are filled with the work of the devil.

John 8:37-38, *"I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."*

John 8:44-47, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."*

Do not be a follower of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Instead, humble yourself, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. Throw away your opinions and seek the Lord while he may be found. Let us call upon the Lord while he is near. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (**1 Peter 5:6, Luke 9:23, Isaiah 55:6, Romans 10:13**)

Mark Chapter 15

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"*

After the unlawful trial the Lord Jesus endured he was handed over to Pilate by the religious leaders. They did this because they did not have the legal authority to crucify anyone. The religious leaders lost their authority to execute people. Later in the book of Acts when they killed Stephen it was illegal. In the case of the Lord the religious leaders took Jesus to Pilate to have him executed by Roman crucifixion. They knew they could put political pressure on Pilate to crucify the Lord Jesus.

Pilate never found the Lord Jesus guilty of anything. He realized it was for envy the religious leaders handed him over. Though Pilate never convicted Jesus of any crime he handed him over to be crucified. The Lord Jesus suffered by the Romans and was led away to the cross.

A Satanic frenzy came upon the crowd in Jerusalem, and they screamed for the blood of Christ. They screamed in the streets: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The soldiers mocked Christ when he was turned over to them. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They found a purple robe and draped it around him. They bowed down to him and said, "Hail King of the Jews!"

The Lord Jesus could not carry his cross all the way to Calvary, but had help to carry the cross. Even today the Lord Jesus needs people to bear the cross with him. The Lord Jesus wants to partner with us in this generation to bring the message of the gospel to this lost generation.

He was crucified between two thieves. While he hung there the crowds asked the question, "If he is the Christ, why doesn't he save himself?" This question showed that they did not understand that Christ had to suffer and die for their sins.

Before Jesus died he cried out: *"My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?"*

At this point all the sins that ever have been or ever will be were placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He bore the sins of many and made atonement by his death on the cross.

When Jesus died on the cross a Roman centurion rendered the verdict of Jesus Christ. **Mark 15:39**, *"And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God."* A Roman soldier could see the truth about the Lord Jesus but the religious leaders did not.

After the Lord died he was buried by his friends. He was buried in a tomb which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea.

The Lord Jesus was accused of blasphemy for being who he was. The Lord Jesus was the Son of God. He is God the Son. For this reason he was condemned by the religious leaders and murdered by the

Roman government. Those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ also experience similar treatment from the religious world and the secular world.

Christians do not belong to this world. Our kingdom will come one day. Until then, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Mark Chapter 16

The gospel of Mark is an abbreviated synopsis of events which were further expanded on in Matthew and Luke.

The Lord Jesus first appeared to Mary out of whom he had previously cast out demons. He appeared to this Mary of Magdalene. She then related to the disciples that the Lord Jesus was alive. The disciples did not believe her testimony. The Lord Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but the disciples did not believe their testimony either. Finally the Lord Jesus appeared to all of the disciples at once and he rebuked them for their unbelief.

I wonder why the Lord Jesus appeared to Mary first. She became the first person to announce the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day. When the women who had followed Jesus went to his tomb on that day to put spices on his body they discovered the tomb was opened and an angel was there. The angel told them that Jesus of Nazareth, who died from crucifixion and was buried, was now raised from the dead. He told the women to tell the other disciples and Peter that he would go before them into Galilee.

The Lord Jesus gave his disciples the great commission and told them to preach the gospel. He said that those who worked with him in preaching the gospel would be followed by signs such as speaking in new tongues, driving out demons, healing from snake bites, and also healing from any poison. The Lord Jesus said that those who followed him would lay hands on the sick and they would recover.

After he gave his disciples instructions he was taken up to heaven and sat at the right hand of God. Here again we have evidence that God is three in one. He is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that*

which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"

Romans 10:9-10, 13, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

The Gospel of Luke

Luke Chapter 1

Luke 1:1-4

Luke dedicated this historical record of the life of Jesus Christ to his friend Theophilus. From the way this dedication was worded we assume Theophilus was an important person. Evidently he was a Christian and knew Luke in some capacity. Luke wrote this account of the life of Jesus Christ to help Theophilus and also provided a document which was included in the canon of the Holy Bible.

The gospel of Luke is scripture and is inspired by the Holy Spirit to help us understand the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, his life, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection. Luke also recorded the history of the early church in the book of Acts.

The gospel of Luke is different in that it records the history of how the Lord Jesus was born in a manger, the events surrounding his birth, and his early life.

Luke was included in what theologians call the synoptic gospels, which is Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Though Luke may have written this for one person it has touched millions of lives. How often do we in our Christian life think we are just helping one person, but in the end, we may find out that many lives were touched through our serving one person. We won't know until we get to heaven how many others were blessed through our helping one person.

Luke 1:5-23

Zacharias served in the temple as a priest burning incense. He was part of a large group of people who took turn serving in the temple. It was his turn and when he went in to burn the incense an angel appeared to him. This angel had a message for Zacharias. The name of the angel was Gabriel. How do we know this? The angel told Zacharias his name. Gabriel told him his name when he rebuked him. Zacharias did not believe Gabriel's message.

Gabriel's message was that Zacharias' wife would have a son who would grow up to be a prophet. His son, who became John the Baptist, would prepare the way for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. As we learn in this chapter, these were all related to one another. Zacharias' wife, Elisabeth, was related to Mary the mother of Jesus. Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins.

Gabriel told Zacharias to name the son John and gave specific instructions on how the boy would be raised and grow up. These instructions were similar to the laws regarding a Nazarite in the Old Testament. It was also similar to instructions that an angel gave to the parents of Samson in the book of Judges.

Because Zacharias did not believe the message he was stricken dumb until John was born. He was disciplined for his unbelief by the angel. Unbelief at God's word is very dangerous. We should hear God's word's, receive God's word, and believe God's word. Walk in agreement with the truth in God's word.

When the time of his ministry was complete Zacharias returned home. Everyone knew something happened to him in the temple and that he had a vision.

Angels are real. God sends angels to intervene in the lives of people on earth. Sometimes God sends an angel to give a message to people under certain circumstances. Whatever message an angel has it should not contradict the written word of God. If it does then the angel is not from the Lord but is false. Also, an angel will never accept worship. An angel from the Lord will point you to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to its own self.

God hears our prayers. This is an example of how a man prayed for something but evidently did not have faith his prayer would be answered. Another example of this is in the book of Acts when Christians prayed for Peter to be released and when he was released they did not believe it. It is interesting to me how God answers some prayers when people do not really have faith the prayer will be answered. This fact contradicts the false doctrine of the prosperity gospel.

This chapter is filled with the supernatural. When Christians try to minimize the supernatural part of the Bible they end up with dry morality and dead religion like Zacharias. Obviously Zacharias went through the religious routines. He did not expect to hear from God or receive an answer to his prayer. We should have an attitude of expecting God to hear our prayer and answer our prayer. Let's sing the song of faith before the Red Sea is parted. Before we are delivered let us praise God for the deliverance so that we can learn more of who the Lord is and experience his presence in our lives.

Luke 1:26-38

Six months after Gabriel appeared to Zacharias at the temple he also appeared to Mary. He told her that she would have a son and his name would be called Jesus. Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be great and would be called the Son of the Highest and that the Lord God would give him the throne of his father David. He would reign over the house of Jacob and his kingdom would have no end.

Part of this prophecy from Gabriel is still yet in our future today. The Lord Jesus will yet return to the earth and sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and reign over all the nations of the earth with a rod of iron. This is described for us in the book of Revelation.

Mary had questions about how this prophecy would happen but she did not have an attitude of unbelief as Zacharias. She was not disciplined or rebuked in the same way as Zacharias. Mary believed the word which the angel spoke to her.

The angel told Mary that the Holy Ghost would come upon her and she would conceive a son. The angel told Mary that her cousin Elisabeth was also expecting a son.

Verse 37, *"For with God nothing shall be impossible."*

I need to remember this in my life. With God nothing is impossible. I have hope because I do not yet know what the Lord can do in my life. Consider the account of Job in the Bible and remember that the Lord is merciful and filled with compassion for his servants.

Nothing is impossible with the Lord.

Mary believed the message from Gabriel.

Within this prophecy from Gabriel we also have a future hope that the Lord Jesus will return again to this earth and reign over the nation of Israel. We have not yet seen the complete fulfillment of this prophecy. However, since we know that the word which Gabriel said to Mary was fulfilled we know also that the rest of this prophecy will be fulfilled as well. The Lord Jesus will sit upon the throne of David and rule over the nation of Israel. Do we believe this message as Mary did? Or do we have the attitude of Zacharias who did not believe and was rebuked by the Lord.

Let us have faith and believe in God's word. Nothing is impossible with the Lord. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think.

Luke 1:39-45

Elizbeth receives a revelation when she was filled with the Holy Spirit. What did she know? She knew that Mary was carrying a baby who was the Messiah. She said that Mary was the mother of her Lord. She also knew that Mary believed the word from the angel Gabriel. This stands in contrast to Zacharias who did not believe the word of the angel and was disciplined for his unbelief.

I don't think Elizabeth knew this information before Mary came to visit her simply because of how this was recorded by Luke. This was the first contact Mary and Elizabeth had and it seems from a straight forward reading of these verses that Elizabeth did not know any of these things before Mary showed up. She received knowledge from the Holy Spirit when she heard Mary's greeting. This might be called a "word of knowledge" from the Lord and it is a very real spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. Revelation like this from the Lord is real.

What did Elizabeth say? She called Mary "blessed" and also the fruit of her womb "blessed". She was blessed because God chose her to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was great humility in Elizabeth's words. She was surprised that the mother of the Messiah would come and visit her. This shows that Elizabeth did not think of herself more highly than she ought but she considered herself with sober judgment.

She shared with Mary that the baby inside her leaped with joy when he heard the voice of Mary. This shows there was a deep connection between John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. That connection was the Holy Spirit of God.

Christian brothers and sisters have this connection as well. I've never known in my life more joy than when I find a true brother in Christ. It is truly the greatest joy in my life to fellowship with another brother in Christ and to encourage one another in our faith in the Lord Jesus. Some of my greatest moments of happiness were over an open Bible with another brother or sister in Christ.

This passage also reminds me of how important it is to show hospitality to others and be ready to drop everything when someone shows up. You never know you might be entertaining angels without realizing it.

Luke 1:46-56

Mary's response to the greeting of Elizabeth was to give praise and honor and glory to God. From her innermost being she gave praise to God and rejoiced in the Lord. She acknowledged it was the Lord who chose her and that she had done nothing to commend herself to God. It was the Lord who singled her out for the blessing of being the mother of the Messiah. She realized that all generations would remember her and consider her blessed by the Lord. This realization was her agreement with the truth stated by the angel Gabriel and her agreement with the words of Elizabeth. She did not lift herself up as someone to be praised but rather she acknowledged the truth about her participation in eternal history.

Mary taught us something about the character and nature of God in her song of praise. She said that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This is a revelation of God which goes through the entire Bible and it is the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus always opposed the proud and gave grace to the humble.

Mary remembered the promise given to Abraham and his seed forever. Mary understood the promise of the Messiah which was the seed of the woman. This was revealed in Genesis when God promised the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. This prophecy was fulfilled at Calvary when the Lord Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all earth below! Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns.

Luke 1:57-66

Elizabeth gave birth to John. Her relatives wanted to give him another name but she insisted on calling him John. Everyone was confused by this because usually a child was named after a close relative and there was no one in that family named John. The relatives turned to Zacharias to see what he wanted to name John. He asked for something to write on and he wrote the boy's name was John like the angel Gabriel told him. When Zacharias did this he was released from his dumbness and was able to speak again. The first thing he said was praise to God.

We can learn a lot from the account of Elizabeth, Zacharias, and John. One thing I've learned is that when we obey God it sets us free. When Zacharias obeyed the Lord he was set free and able to speak again. Instead of unbelief he was filled with faith and praise to God.

Another thought is that when God does something in our life it is never for just us alone. Everyone in that entire area was touched by what happened to Elizabeth, Zacharias, and John. Everyone was in awe and wonder at what God did and they all knew God had special plans for John. Everyone remembered

what happened. They laid it up in their hearts which was the same phrase used to describe how Mary remembered everything which happened to her.

I know in my life when God touched me I remember it. I had a few times in my life when God spoke to me or touched me and I never forgot. I stored up the works of God in my heart so I can remember in the future that God is real, and he loves me, and he has a plan for my life.

Jesus Christ is God the Son and he is the Son of God. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 1:67-80

When Gabriel's word was fulfilled Zacharias got his voice back. He wrote down the name of his son was John and at that moment got his voice back.

The first thing he did was give honor, glory, and praise to the Lord Jesus.

I've noticed there is a pattern in this chapter. The angel Gabriel spoke to Zacharias and Mary and told them they would have sons, one a prophet, and the other the Messiah. These two accounts are tied together by the angel Gabriel. Also, in both cases, the fulfillment of the prophecy brought further prophecy out of the mouth of Mary and Zacharias. There is a multiplication of praise, worship, and proclaiming God's word. There is multiplied revelation of who God is and what God does in our lives.

We see this continues even to this day. God's word stands before us. We receive God's word, we believe God's word, and as a result, our lives bring honor, glory, and praise to God. We open our mouth and we speak and the Lord speaks through us to others. The word of God is not bound by time, or space, or distance. The word of God is not bound, but continues to multiply, and spread, and touch the lives of those who hear, receive, and believe. We become a vessel of God's word to reach the next generation of those who hear, receive, and believe.

Zacharias knew the plan of God for the life of his son John. He said that John was a prophet and would go before the Lord to prepare the way for him.

Verse 80, *"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."*

There's a lot packed in that verse. We grow stronger spiritually when we are hid with God in the desert. It is through suffering that we learn obedience. It is on the backside of the desert that we learn how weak and helpless we are. It is in that place we are humbled and so we learn that we do not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the Lord do we live.

Luke Chapter 2

Luke 2:1-7

The account of the birth of Jesus Christ was contained within a historical context. Luke recorded the names of Caesar Augustus, and Cyrenias. He described the Roman tax edict which forced people to relocate temporarily to their hometown. Through this movement of the government the Lord fulfilled

his word that the Lord Jesus would be born in the city of Bethlehem. The King of kings and Lord of lords was born in a stable and laid in a manger. This was how God decided he would be born into the world. As a babe in a manger. This revealed something fundamental about the character and nature of God.

It also shows us that the kingdom of God is radically different from the world system we live in. The world system is based upon the names of men who make themselves famous. They exalt their own names and in this way control other men. They force men to submit to their names and the more people they bring under their name the more power (provision, protection, and portion) they create. This is the way of Satan.

The way of the Lord Jesus is completely opposite. The kingdom of God is not based on the pride of life. It is based on humility and love. Read **Philippians 2** to see a description of the humility of the Lord Jesus.

When we truly understand this principle it reveals the stark contrast between the Lord Jesus and the way churches, businesses, and our daily lives are conducted in this world. We are far, far away from the kingdom of God in this current world system.

This world is passing away. The Lord Jesus came into this world as a babe in a manger, and when he grew up he told others he had no place to lay his head. Those who followed him became like him. They lose more and more of this world but gain more and more of the kingdom of God.

There was no room for them in the inn. This summarized the attitude of most people toward the Lord Jesus. They did not make any room for him in their lives. Yet he was the most important person who ever lived on this planet. He was greater than any king or president or celebrity who ever lived. Why can't people understand this? Because they have made their agreement with Satan and he blinded their eyes to the truth of the majesty and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their agreement with Satan blinded their eyes and they could not see the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Believe in your heart that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and you will be saved. Saved from self, saved from sin, saved from the devil, saved from this world system, and saved from a lake of fire.

Luke 2:8-21

Angels from heaven appeared to a group of shepherds in a field at night. The shepherds were terrified but the angels told them not to be afraid because they brought good news of the birth of the Messiah. The angels told the shepherds where to find the newborn Messiah. The sign to look for was a baby lying in a manger. Notice how much was made of the fact that the King of the Universe was born in a stable and laid in a manger. God was drawing attention to his character and his nature. Who is God? Look at this lowly stable and manger and behold the God of the Universe.

The shepherds did what the angels said and found the Lord Jesus lying in the manger. They told everyone in that area about what they saw, heard, and experienced regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. This was normal for anyone who had truly come into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph and Mary circumcised Jesus on the eighth day according to the law and gave him the name Jesus. He was given the name Jesus by the angel Gabriel before he was conceived, just like John the Baptist.

God knows our name. Many people say that they know their Lord Jesus, but does Jesus know them? Does he know their name?

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus is saved. He is returning again to receive us unto himself that where he is we may be also. May the Lord Jesus return quickly to this earth and establish his kingdom over all the nations of the earth.

Luke 2:22-40

In these scriptures we see angels from the Lord announcing the arrival of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels appeared to Zacharias, Mary, and to shepherds. Here we see the proclamation of the Son of God was given to two prophets who were in the temple when Joseph and Mary brought the child there to present him to the Lord.

The first prophet was Simeon. He was glad to see the child because it meant his earthly journey was almost over and he was ready to be with the Lord in heaven. He also blessed Mary and Joseph and had a personal word of prophecy for Mary that a sword would pierce her heart. No doubt this word was for when the Lord Jesus died upon the cross and Mary was there and saw him executed.

The other prophet was Anna. She was a godly woman who had served God in fasting and praying for many years since her husband died. She also gave thanks to the Lord and acknowledged that this child was the promised Messiah of God.

Once Joseph and Mary completed all the requirements of the law regarding a newborn son they returned to Nazareth and the Lord Jesus grew up, strong in spirit, and the grace of God was upon him. The scripture describes Jesus as being full of wisdom.

This was a good example of how God used believers to confirm a word of God. It shows us how the church can work together to encourage one another and to build up the faith of one another. It also shows us that the Lord reveals specific truths to individuals and those individuals then have a responsibility to share with others.

Every Christian should share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Let us encourage one another, share the gospel, and build up the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Luke 2:41-52

Mary and Joseph went up every year to the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. When Jesus was twelve years old he went with them to Jerusalem. When the feast was over they went back home but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem at the temple. They did not realize that Jesus was missing for an entire day! Finally they found him after three days!

The Lord Jesus amazed the people who were in the temple with his questions. He listened to them and asked questions. Everyone who listened to him were amazed at his understanding and answers.

Understandably Mary and Joseph were upset with Jesus when they found him. The Lord Jesus replied, *"Didn't you know I had to be about my father's business?"* Mary and Joseph did not understand his answer, which was a question.

The Lord Jesus went with them down to Nazareth and was subject to them. Mary remembered all of these events in the life of Jesus and pondered them in her heart.

The Lord Jesus continued to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

I don't think this account should be interpreted as Jesus being rebellious towards his parents. I don't think his attitude was one of rebellion. However, as in this example, we see in the life of Jesus many time people did not understand his purpose, his mission, and why he did what he did. Even his own disciples tried to stop him from going to the cross at Calvary. Jesus was not turned aside from this goal, and that was to complete his Father's will.

How can we apply this to our life? Do we have this single minded goal and purpose? Is our goal in life to please God? Is our goal in life complete obedience to Gods' will for our life?

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus is saved. Cry out to God most high, unto God who performs all things for us.

Luke Chapter 3

Luke 3:1-38

I'm taking this whole chapter at once because most of the second half of this chapter is a list of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. This genealogy is important but I'm not going to focus much on that in my notes here. Instead, I will focus on the ministry of John the Baptist in the first half of the chapter.

Just as Gabriel and Zacharias prophesied the baby John grew up to become a prophet of the Lord. He fulfilled the word in Isaiah of a man who came to prepare the way of the Lord. He was a voice crying in the wilderness.

What happened when John began to preach? Immediately the devil sent people to oppose this new work of God. John recognized the snakes and called them out.

Verse 7, *"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"*

Anytime the Lord sends a man of God to proclaim his word there will be opposition from the forces and powers of the devil. The power of Satan will be manifest by insincere people who are his mouthpiece.

The prophet Jeremiah also suffered opposition from people like this. Even his own close relatives wanted to kill him. But God promised Jeremiah he would protect him and deliver him. (**Jeremiah 15:20-21**)

The Lord delivered Jeremiah from the attack of evil men but in the case of John the Baptist God allowed him to be put in prison and eventually he lost his life. This is the case for many in the New Testament. The majority of the apostles and disciples lost their lives as a result of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must be prepared for this.

The Lord Jesus came to be baptized by John the Baptist. He did this to fulfill all righteousness. He had no sin himself but he came to identify himself completely with sinful man. God the Father set his seal of approval upon his Son at this time and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we can plainly see that God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God is three in one. Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, church, and the nations. Three days and all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Luke Chapter 4

Luke 4:1-13

The Lord Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for forty days. During this time the Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil. Forty days reminds me of the forty years that Israel was in the wilderness and tested. There are a lot of parallels in scripture like this. This is one way the Holy Spirit teaches us spiritual lessons. Testing and walking in the wilderness is a normal part of the Christian life. Temptation is a necessary part of the Christian life. The Lord Jesus taught us how to overcome temptation. If you compare this temptation with the temptation of the serpent and Eve you can see parallels. Also, the scripture in 1 John 2:16 sheds spiritual light upon these temptations as well.

The Lord Jesus overcame the devil by staying in the word. He was abiding in the word of God. His heart and his mind was filled with the scriptures. He was filled with the word and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. This points us back to two types of manna in the wilderness: manna that tasted like honey (the word), and manna that tasted like fresh oil (Holy Spirit). Do you know what the third category of manna was in the wilderness? It was manna taken and put in a pot and hidden in the ark of the covenant. (**Hebrews 9:4**)

The Lord Jesus had authority to overcome the devil because he walked in the word and walked in the Spirit. Any man who walks in the word and in the Holy Spirit receives the authority of God's kingdom to overcome the devil. We overcome the enemy by abiding in the word and the Spirit and by walking in the authority of God's Kingdom.

God taught us this lesson in the wilderness. We cannot learn this in a classroom or by reading books. We learn by experience. Head knowledge helps but it is through experience we are changed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus went before us. He endured the temptations and much more in his earthly life. Consider him who endured. What can we learn from this? How can we apply this to our every day life situations?

Here is a promise from scripture to help us. **1 Corinthians 10:13**, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*"

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. The man who was crucified with Jesus asked the Lord Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. The Lord Jesus told him that he would be with him that day in paradise. What can I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Luke 4:14-30

The beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus was met with complete rejection from his family and hometown.

After the temptations in the wilderness the Lord Jesus returned to the town where he grew up. In Nazareth he went to the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah. He quoted a prophecy which was fulfilled that day in the Lord Jesus. He was and is the fulfillment of prophecy.

When he said that he was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy they rebelled against him. They listened to the scriptures but they rejected the one who gave us the scriptures. This is still true today. Many people claim God's word and know scriptures but they do not know the Lord Jesus. They have religion but reject the living God standing before them.

What happened to the Lord Jesus happens to every man of God. Every man of God faces rejection and opposition. The rejection of the Lord Jesus was so violent they wanted to throw him off a cliff. The Lord Jesus walked through the midst of them and went his way.

What does this teach us? It is normal for the Christian to be rejected by unbelieving family, friends, relatives, and even entire churches. It is normal for Christians to be cast out and to be rejected by unbelievers. The most violent unbelievers are religious or intellectual unbelievers. Churches are filled with people who happily sit and listen to God's word read and to sermons but their hearts are filled with violence, murder, and unbelief. They worship self. They do not worship the living God. They reject the Lord Jesus Christ. If you stand for the Lord Jesus they will reject you and cast you out.

The Lord Jesus did not fight with them. He left them. He went his way. This is a lesson I am learning. Sometimes we just have to walk away. This is an important lesson for anyone who wants to follow the Lord Jesus with all of their heart. Sometimes we have to walk away from people. It is OK. Some people will never change. They will not listen to the word of God. They are filled with their own opinions and they worship themselves.

Jeremiah 15:19-21, "*Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. 20 And I will make thee unto this people a*

fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved.

Luke 4:31-37

The Lord Jesus demonstrated his authority to drive out demons. The Lord Jesus went to Capernaum and taught them on the Sabbath days. The people were amazed because his word was with power. There was a man in the church who had a demon and cried with a loud voice. The Lord Jesus rebuked the demon and drove it out of the man. Everyone was amazed and the word spread all over the country.

I have several thoughts when I read these verses. It stands out to me that a demon possessed man is going to church. Why would a man who is demon possessed be in church? What was he doing there before Jesus exposed him? Ask yourself the question: how many people are coming to church who are not only unbelievers but demon possessed? The next thing I noticed is that this demon possessed man knew exactly who the Lord Jesus Christ was. The devil believes in God. He knows who the Lord Jesus is. Is it possible to get into a religious conversation with someone, assuming they are a Christian, and the entire time the person be demon possessed? Just because a person is religious does not mean they are a Christian. It might mean they have demons who are lying to you and pretending to be religious.

Again, why is a demon attending a church service? Do you think demons are attending church today? How would you know?

This demon revealed himself by screaming in the middle of a church service. Have you ever been in a church service where someone interrupted the Pastor? Have you ever been in a church where someone started talking loud enough to stop the preacher or interrupt the service?

There is a reason the apostle Paul said that a church service should be conducted decently and in order. When someone is out of order, or disruptive, it might be an indication of demonic activity.

The Lord Jesus has all authority to drive out the devil. He gave authority to Christians to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in this world. We have overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Proclaim the gospel. Proclaim the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid of the enemy. Submit yourself to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you. **(James 4:7)**

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God the Father. He lives forever making intercession for us. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God in the name of Jesus. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 4:38-44

The Lord Jesus went into the house of Peter's mother-in-law. He healed her of a fever and she immediately got up and served others. We see a pattern when the Lord Jesus touched a person's life. When a person is saved, healed, delivered, and set free they serve others. This is an automatic response to the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ on a person's life. The person who meets the Lord Jesus will desire to devote his life thereafter to serving the Lord Jesus and others.

By this time the reputation of the Lord's healing power spread and many people came to him. He healed them of their diseases and drove out the devils who afflicted them. The devils knew who he was but the Lord stopped them from speaking. This is an indication that we should have nothing to do with evil people, even those who pretend to promote the cause of the gospel. Always avoid allowing evil people to have anything to do with the ministry or proclaiming the gospel. Do not allow them to associate their presence with the work which God gave us to do. We see this in the history of Nehemiah and Ezra as well when they build the city and altar. They would not let unbelievers have any part of the work.

The Lord did not settle down and enjoy the perks of a successful ministry. He was determined to continue forward to share the word of God with other places. He did not allow success to determine his course. He came to seek and save those who were lost. He came to serve and to lay down his life. He did not allow anything to stand in the way of his mission. He came to give his life and lay his life down as a sacrifice to save others.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus is saved.

Luke Chapter 5

Luke 5:1-11

The crowd was so great that the Lord Jesus resorted to a boat and preached from the water. The boat belonged to Simon, a fisherman, who confessed that he fished all night and caught nothing. At the word of the Lord Jesus, however, he put down his net and caught more fish than he could haul in. He requested help from his fellow fishermen to haul in the great catch. As a result, Simon knew that God was present in the Lord Jesus and he requested that Jesus would go away. Peter said, "I am a sinful man."

In scripture men who saw God were afraid they would die. Moses, and Samson's father, all thought they would die if they saw God. This was a common idea in the Bible and expressed by God also. If a man saw God he could not live in this human body. From this context we understand why Simon reacted this way. However, the Lord Jesus reassured him that he would not die. Indeed, not only would he live but would be used by God to bring eternal life to others through the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Simon understood who the Lord Jesus was when the Lord Jesus demonstrated his goodness and provision. Many times men come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because of the goodness of God. **Romans 2:4**, "*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering;*

not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" This was my experience. When I was a young man God showed kindness and mercy towards me and the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ brought me to my knees in salvation and worship.

Simon could not bring all the fish to the shore by himself. He needed the help of his brothers. Notice how in Paul's letters he included the names of his fellow workers in the gospel. Each one of us has a part in the ministry but cannot succeed alone. Each one needs his brothers and sisters in Christ to work with him and alongside him. We each belong to one another and each serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem arises when brothers are suspicious and think their brother is not serving Jesus. We live in a time when the gospel is so commercialized and sold as a product that people no longer recognize when a true man of God needs support. People no longer see the importance of helping one another to bring fish ashore. We live in a cynical generation where people no longer trust one another. Therefore the work suffers. We are only able to bring a few fish to shore if that.

The Lord Jesus told Peter he would no longer be a fisherman but instead fishing for men. Peter would become the great evangelist who on the day of Pentecost proclaimed the gospel and thousands came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus Christ will be saved.

Luke 5:12-16

The background of leprosy in the Bible can be found in Leviticus 13 and 14. God provided instructions for Israel on how to deal with this problem. There were examples in the Old Testament of people who were infected with this disease and healed by God. Naaman the Syrian and Miriam the sister of Moses were infected with leprosy and healed by God. This disease was seen by people as God's punishment on a person for his sin. It was thought to be incurable except by a miracle from God.

This leper believed the Lord Jesus could heal him. He expressed complete faith in God's ability even though he did not know whether or not the Lord Jesus was willing to heal him. He knew he could. He just did not know if he would. This is the confusion the enemy puts into the minds of those who believe in God. I know he can, but will he? Don't be confused by this. The Lord Jesus demonstrated that he can heal us and he that is willing to heal us as well.

People were forbidden to touch a leper because of the probability of infection spreading. However, the Lord Jesus reached out and touched the man. He was healed instantly. There was never any danger of infection to the Lord Jesus. No disease or death or sin can stand in the way of the Son of God. He destroyed all the works of the devil.

Why did the Lord Jesus tell the man to follow the religious laws and present himself to the priests according to the Jewish laws? The Lord Jesus wanted him to be a testimony to the priests. The Lord Jesus cared about all these people. His compassion extended to the religious Jew as well as the lowly sick folk.

This same account of the leper was also recorded in Matthew and Mark. It was an important event in the life of the Lord Jesus and was recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He ascended into heaven and is even now at the right hand of God making intercession for us. He will return again to receive us unto himself that where he is we may be also. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus is saved.

Luke 5:17-26

The friends of a paralytic did all they could to make sure that he received help from the Lord Jesus. What are we doing to bring people to Jesus? What am I doing today to help bring others to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? These men let down the paralytic through the roof of the house. The Lord Jesus pronounced the man's sins were forgiven. In this case we can assume his physical disability was related to sin. The Lord Jesus forgave the man's sins and also healed the man's body. Spiritual and physical healing go hand in hand with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus does not make a difference between salvation of the soul and salvation of the body. In God's kingdom we have a new body like the Lord Jesus. We will have a resurrected body in God's kingdom.

There were always people who opposed the work of God. Notice it was almost always religious, self righteous people who opposed the work of God. Satan deceived people with false religion in order to inoculate them from having true faith in God. The Lord Jesus knew their thoughts. He forgave sins. He healed the man. This was evidence that God was in their midst but they were unable to discern the facts before them. The same is true today. God speaks to us today but who is listening? Who can hear the voice of the Lord today?

The closer we get to the kingdom the less we can abide false religious systems. Judgment begins with the house of God. God discerns between the brother of the flesh and the brother of the spirit. Are you an overcomer?

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus is saved.

Luke 5:27-39

The Lord Jesus called the publican Levi to follow him. This same Levi was Matthew. He immediately left everything and followed the Lord Jesus.

He invited the Lord Jesus to his house and threw a party for him and his friends. These friends were publicans and sinners.

The Lord Jesus sat down with them and no doubt some came to faith in Christ.

However, religious folk criticized the Lord Jesus for visiting with sinners. The Lord Jesus replied that sick people need a doctor. He did not come to call righteous people but sinners to repentance.

They change their strategy and criticize him because he did not fast like John the Baptist. Note that these religious leaders did not believe in John or Jesus. The comparison was sinister on many levels. This was a temptation of the pride of life to cause a division between him and John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus did not fall into their trap. He taught them that there was a time and place for all things. There was a season and a time for fasting but at that time that it was appropriate for him and his disciples to eat with these sinners. He taught them that they tried to contain him in their religious

system and that he would never fit into their system of religion. God is too big to fit into the religious boxes men create.

The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. His goal was to die on the cross so we could be saved from our sins. Christ died for our sins. Jesus said when he was lifted up he would draw all men to himself. Jesus was lifted up on the cross. He was buried. He rose again on the third day.

Romans 8:34, *"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."*

Luke Chapter 6

Luke 6:1-5

The Lord Jesus and his disciples went through fields and ate produce. This was on a Sabbath day so they were criticized by the religious leaders. The religious leaders said they were breaking the law because they picked up food from a field on the Sabbath day. This might seem ridiculous to us today but it was a serious accusation then. People were stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath. However, the Lord Jesus responded to them with scripture. Notice how the Lord Jesus responded to his accusers with simple truth from the Bible. He reminded them of the account of when David ate the holy priest's bread and was not guilty of breaking the law. He then told them that he was the Lord of the Sabbath.

I believe the Lord Jesus did these things on the Sabbath to provoke the religious people. I believe this was recorded for us because we have a great need to be set free from false religion. The Lord Jesus exposed the hypocrisy and used the scriptures which they were proud of to show them how hardhearted and unmerciful they were. Religious people are the most unmerciful and hardhearted? Why? Because false religion breeds self righteousness. Self righteous people are the most dangerous people you can find. They can kill you and think they are doing God a favor.

People today who preach we are under the Sabbath are no better than these religious leaders who wanted to kill Jesus. This false religion of Sabbath keeping is exactly the kind of thing the Lord Jesus exposed in all of these stories about breaking the Sabbath. Don't be deceived by false religion that teaches we are under the law or should keep the Sabbath. Flee from these false prophets and false religion. It spreads like cancer in the church.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day according the scriptures. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 6:6-11

The religious leaders looked for any reason to accuse the Lord Jesus of wrongdoing. They definitely felt threatened by him and his ministry. Why? All he did was heal somebody! Why was this such a threat to these religious leaders?

To understand this we need discernment into why men use religion to control people. Most of the time religious leaders are in their positions for provision and protection. They convince themselves that they do what they do for God but in reality they are in it for themselves. It is a way to make a living.

In those days there was an entire religious system which controlled not only people going to synagogue but their entire society and community. Religious leaders had much more influence than just over those who came to church.

The Lord Jesus was a threat to this. He did not walk according to their man made rules and traditions. And he had spiritual authority and power which they could not deny. He healed people right in front of them and everyone else in church. There was no denying his spiritual authority and power. Yet he did not live according to their rules.

They knew if people followed the Lord Jesus that it would destroy their system of religious control. In other words, they were in danger of losing their careers, their positions, and their prestige. Religious men in positions of prestige will fight you tooth and nail and kill you before they allow you to damage their reputation. I've seen this in my life with powerful religious leaders. They are very dangerous people, just like King Saul in the Old Testament.

Even though he knew their thoughts that they would plot to kill him the Lord Jesus still healed the man. He was not stopped by their madness. He was determined to finish the ministry and the goal which he received from the heavenly Father. We must adopt this same determination. No matter what people say about us, no matter how people slander us or belittle us or mock us. We must obey God. We must continue to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't let religious people stop you from obeying God.

Luke 6:12-19

The Lord Jesus prayed all night before he named his disciples. Here is a precedent for the Christian life. Before any great decisions be made spend time in prayer. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God. The Lord Jesus never lacked wisdom, but still he prayed all night before he named his disciples. He waited upon the will of his heavenly Father. This is our example. Prayer comes first, before the decision, before the action, before going forward. There are times when we need extended seasons of seeking the Lord in prayer. There are moments in our lives when it may require staying up all night and praying to overcome in a particular circumstance or situation. Be willing to seek God with all of your heart. Daniel fasted and prayed for 21 days. Moses was on the mountain for 40 days with God. How long are you willing to wait on the Lord? King Saul was not willing to wait for the prophet and as a result he lost everything in his life. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint.

After he named his apostles then he ministered to a great multitude of people. Scripture says that virtue went out of him. The Lord Jesus did not live for himself, but came to seek and to save those who were lost. The Lord Jesus gave his life to others. This is our example. Do we live for self, or do we live for others? Do we employ the gifts God gave us to help others? May the Lord help us to see the opportunity before us today to serve and to be a blessing to others.

The Lord Jesus died upon Calvary for our sins. He gave his life and died so that we could live forever with him. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. He conquered death, hell, and the grave. Because he has overcome we also, who are in him, also overcome. Believe upon the Lord Jesus today and be saved.

Luke 6:20-23

The Lord Jesus said those who are poor, and mourn, and are cast out and called evil for his sake were actually blessed. Why are we blessed? Because we have a great reward in heaven. Those the Lord Jesus blessed were not living their best life now. Their life, instead, was hid with Christ in God. Their life would begin in heaven, not here on this temporary life. In the next verses the Lord Jesus would pronounce woes on those who were living for the here and now. Those who are poor, and hungry, who mourn, and who are cast out for the Lord's sake are to rejoice and dance for joy. When we rejoice in the midst of our sufferings we are truly blessed by God. Our reward is great in heaven.

Let us not live for the here and now. Instead, let us make up our mind that we are living for heaven. We were taught by the Lord Jesus to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth. Our goal is to live for God's kingdom and not for this cursed world system that we are caught in now. Don't live for the world system. Don't set your heart on riches for they will fly away like a bird with wings. Don't live for yourself. Don't worship your own self or glorify your own self. Instead, glorify God. Give praise to God. Don't praise yourself. Don't pat yourself on your back. Instead, give God glory and honor and praise.

Luke 6:24-26

The Lord Jesus turned the thinking of the world system right side up. He overturned the tables of our natural, worldly thinking.

He pronounced woes on those who were rich. Think about this for a minute. The biggest and most powerful churches in America preach the opposite of what the Lord Jesus plainly taught. The Lord Jesus pronounced woes on the rich. Yet the most powerful Christian churches in America preach the exact opposite of this.

How is this possible? We are truly living in the last days. These are perilous days when men are lovers of their own selves. The Lord Jesus pronounced woe upon those who were living for the current, present temporary life in this body. He said those who are full now will be hungry in the next life. Those who laugh now in the present life will mourn and weep in the life to come. If you were popular and made a great name for yourself and all men spoke well of you? It was because you were a false prophet. You were a false preacher. You were a false teacher. Think about that for a minute and let that sink in. That should put the fear of God in our heart. We should realize that we need to flee from the religious Babylon that is American churches.

Our natural, default mindset is to worship men who make a name for themselves. We praise men who do well for themselves in this world system. We seek to be like them and to follow them. Why? Because the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We need the Holy Spirit to expose the idolatry, covetousness, and unbelief which exists in our hearts. We are natural worshipers of self. We need the Holy Spirit to convict us, correct us, and help us to see clearly what we are and who God really is.

May the Lord take these few verses and open the eyes of our spirit so we can understand how holy, awesome, and powerful the Lord Jesus Christ is. May God open our eyes so we will fear the Lord and depart from evil. Let us humble our hearts, and repent, and ask the Lord to grant us grace so we can walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Luke 6:27-36

Here was the way of the Christian life in relationships with other believers and with unbelievers. We should not retaliate or seek revenge against people who sin against us. Instead, we love people, pray for them, and bless them. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil by doing good. The Lord takes care of people who hurt us, or harm us, or steal from us, or take advantage of us. Leave that to the Lord. Do not worry about your life. Be prepared to lay your life down and love people even those who hate you. You will find people hate you simply because you are a Christian. Don't be surprised by this. Don't be surprised when people speak evil of you simply because you are a Christian. Love your enemies. Do good to them. Pray for them. Ask God to bless them with the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sooner or later you will have people take advantage of you because you are a Christian. This might be money, or your time, or your life in some way. Don't begrudge people when they take your time, or resources, and never pay you back. Trust in God with your life and resources. Don't hold on to your life or resources but let it all go. God will take care of you.

The ability to love your enemies is supernatural. The strength to love people like this can only come from God. This is not human or natural love. Human and natural love runs out of energy quickly. God's love, however, endures forever. God puts his love in our heart by the Holy Spirit. **Romans 5:5**, "*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*"

This scripture reminds me of the testimony of Corrie ten Boom. Her family was killed during World War 2 but after the war she preached the gospel to the people who killed her family. She had a guard in the concentration camp where her sister was killed who attended one of her meetings and he became a Christian. Corrie did not have the human strength to love this man but when she reached out her hand by faith she was filled with the Holy Spirit and enabled by God to love the one who participated in destroying her family. This love comes from God. This is the love of Jesus Christ which he makes available to us if we receive it by faith. By faith we love our enemies. By faith we pray for those who take advantage of us.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 6:37-42

When I read this it reminds me of how the Lord Jesus reproved the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders and told his disciples to avoid them. He said they were blind leaders of the blind and both would fall into a ditch. When I read this it helps me to discern the religious spirit which controls people. What is this religious spirit like? It judges others but is unable to see that it does the same thing that it condemns in other people. It condemns others and cannot see that God condemns it for the same things it condemns other people for. This religious attitude causes people to be blind to their own condition. Instead, it brings pride which blinds a man to his own moral and spiritual condition. It can easily see the faults and failures in other people but is incapable of seeing the same faults and failures in its own life.

I believe the Lord wants us to help our brother with the mote in his eye. However, we cannot help someone if we have the same problem in our life. I think people desire to preach, counsel, or help others but they are not free in their own life. They are bound up with sin, unbelief, idolatry,

covetousness, immorality, and yet they want to help other people. This is religion. It is hypocrisy. We must be completely free and filled with life before we can free someone else and impart spiritual life. We must be completely free in Christ. God places us in Christ. He unites us together with him in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. It is only by abiding in the gospel that we are set free and it is only when we walk in victory we can help other people see the truth and be set free as well. This requires dying to self and allowing the Holy Spirit to live through you. When you do this you are not focusing on judging or condemning others. Instead, you discern the problem and come alongside the brother with love and compassion to help him be set free.

Praise the Lord for setting us free from self, from sin, from the world, and from the devil. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 6:43-45

In the last section the Lord Jesus warned us about judging people. However, in this section we are called to use discernment in dealing with people. There is a negative type of judging that we are to avoid. That kind of judging is tied together with a blindness of one's own sin and faults. However, the discernment described in these verses is completely necessary if we are ever to help others and help ourselves avoid people who would corrupt us.

The Lord Jesus taught us with the analogy of trees and their fruit. A tree brings forth a specific kind of fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree bears good fruit. If you hear bad things coming out of a person's mouth consistently then you know the heart of that person is bad. If you constantly hear good things coming out of a person's mouth you know that person is good.

Even in this, however, you need to discern between things that are "carnal" good things, and what is "spiritual" good. Many people nowadays are into positive confession, but they have no grasp of the truth of the Bible at all. They may say positive words but the spirit and heart behind what they say is covetousness and self worship. It takes the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to discern these things. This is why we can NOT rely upon our natural understanding of people to know what is good and bad. We must rely upon the Holy Spirit to show us the kind of fruit a person has.

Churches are filled with crowds of people. Look at mega churches. Would you say they are bearing good fruit or bad fruit? How do you discern what is good fruit? Is great numbers of people an indication of good fruit? Many times it is not. There were many people who followed King Saul and died with him. Was King Saul good because many people followed him?

When you hear the gospel of Jesus Christ coming out of people consistently you can know they are good. The gospel is this. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Preach to men and tell them they are great sinners, and Jesus Christ is a great Savior. We are wrong in every way. But Jesus is right in all of his ways.

Luke 6:46-49

Our life is compared to building a house. What kind of foundation did you build on? If the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of your life then you have a sure foundation. When you stand before the Lord on judgment day this foundation will stand and your spirit will be saved.

The apostle Paul seemed to build on this analogy in **1 Corinthians 3** when he talked about building upon the foundation. With what material did you use to build with? Do we build on the foundation of the Lord Jesus with obedience to him? Do we walk in the Spirit and produce the fruits of the Spirit? Or do we profess our faith in Christ and yet continue to walk in the flesh like the rest of the world?

It is possible for a man to be a Christian and to walk in the flesh. He will lose his reward and inheritance if he does. We must learn to build on the solid foundation of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must learn to put his word into practice in our every day lives. This is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must yield ourselves to the Lord by abiding in the gospel, by staying in his word, by staying in prayer. Then we will have the spiritual strength to obey him and to walk in his word. Then we will build a life which will stand up against the fires of judgment at the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15, *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."*

2 Corinthians 5:8-11, *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."*

Christ Jesus died for us upon the cross of Calvary. He gave his life as a ransom, a substitute, for us. If we will believe and receive we will escape the wrath of God. If you do not believe you will face the full wrath of God's fist of judgment one day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

Luke Chapter 7

Luke 7:1-10

The Lord Jesus commended the faith of the Centurion. He also commended the faith of a Gentile woman who had faith in him. These were people outside the house of Israel but knew that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah and could heal them of their problems.

In this case the Centurion had a servant who was sick and about to die. The Centurion sent his request through the Jewish leaders. These Jews wanted to help him because he loved the Jewish nation and built a synagogue. Notice this man's faith in the God of Israel was expressed through a practical demonstration of good works. As a result, the Jews reasoned with the Lord Jesus that this man was "worthy" of his help. This is an interesting insight because it showed the importance of living our faith in front of others and not just talking about faith.

After he sent the Jews to intercede with the Lord Jesus he then sent friends to stop Jesus from coming to his house. In the first case he sent the Jews to bring the Lord Jesus to him. Then it seems he changed his mind and sent friends to tell the Lord Jesus not to come to his house but rather speak a word and his servant would be healed. This showed the progress of receiving revelation. He knew the Lord Jesus could help him. Then he realized what he needed was the word of the Lord and his problem would be solved.

This is the place I believe the Lord is bringing me to. God wants me to walk by faith in his word. He wants me to stand upon his word, his promises, and claim his word as my own. He wants me to believe in his word and experience God's power in my life to heal me, set me free, to bring joy instead of mourning, and to bring victory. I believe we can be overcomers today in Christ Jesus. I believe God is calling me and others to take our stand upon his word and proclaim the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan and all his devils are defeated. Sin is no longer my master. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ now. My life is in the hands of my Creator the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be saved from self, sin, the world, the devil, and from a lake of fire.

Luke 7:11-17

The Lord Jesus demonstrated he had power over death. He raised the dead son of this widow from the village of Nain. He met the funeral procession as it left town and caused them to stop in their tracks. He spoke to the dead man and he sat up and was alive. No doubt the people who saw this were thunderstruck with terror at the power of God demonstrated at the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus gave the young man back to his mother and thus restored hope in this present life to her and also to him.

How many people did the Lord Jesus raise from the dead? There was Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus who was the brother of Mary and Martha. The Lord Jesus demonstrated on several occasions his power of life over death. The Lord Jesus said he was the resurrection and life. Anyone who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ received eternal life.

The Lord Jesus destroyed the power of death. He rose from the dead on the third day and demonstrated that he had all power and authority in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You can have eternal life today. Call upon the name of Jesus and ask him to raise you up from the dead and give you new life. **2 Corinthians 5:17**, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

Luke 7:18-35

John the Baptist had a full revelation of who Jesus Christ was. John was there when the Lord Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River and the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove. John the Baptist was there when a voice from heaven said that Jesus was his Son. John saw this, he heard it, he believed it. He confessed that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God. So what was happening when John sent messengers to Jesus to ask him if he was the one or should he wait for someone else?

This showed the humanity of John the Baptist. This showed us that when we suffer like this our faith can be shaken. The enemy can attack us and attempt to take away our faith in the Lord Jesus. However, the Lord was gracious and sent a word back to John to encourage his faith. Look at the evidence. See what Christ has done. See what he did in the Bible. See what he did in your life in the past. Don't forget what God already revealed to you. It is easy to forget. It is easy to let go of what you know is true, especially during times of intense suffering. This should be a warning to us that we need to hold steadfastly to everything the Lord spoke to us. Hold on to everything God revealed to you through his word. Do not forget and do not let go of God's word to you.

The Lord Jesus sent a word of encouragement to John. Then he spoke to the crowd around him. Those who already humbled themselves and were baptized by John gladly heard the word of the Lord Jesus. Those who did not humble their hearts or confess their sins would not hear the word of the Lord Jesus. The Lord ended this exhortation when he said that no matter how a messenger of truth presented himself to the world that the world would always reject the truth. John came in one manner and Jesus in another manner. But it did not matter how they spoke or presented themselves. They both spoke the truth and both were rejected by those who refused to humble themselves.

Sometimes the prophet of the Lord would be rebuked by the world. They accuse him of being unloving or too hard on people. They would criticize the man of God's methods! But this was just their way of rejecting the truth of what the prophet spoke. He spoke the truth but they rejected his words when they said that they don't like the way he spoke. They were only deceiving their themselves when they did this. They were not deceiving the Lord. The Lord knew their hearts and he saw the pride in them.

Luke 7:36-50

The forgiveness of her sins was evident because of the love she showed towards the Lord Jesus. Someone who experiences the forgiveness of their sins will love the Lord Jesus with all their heart. This is an automatic response to the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. This woman had something which Simon the Pharisee did not have. Her sins were forgiven. Her faith made her whole in Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus knew the thoughts of these religious men. Even before they said anything he knew what they were thinking. The Lord knows our thoughts. He can see what we are thinking and knows what is in our heart even before we ourselves know.

The Lord Jesus forgives our sins. When we receive the Lord our heart overflows with thanksgiving and love and worship. She worshiped the Lord Jesus. This is the desire and the response of every soul who has been in the presence of the Lord Jesus. You cannot touch him and not love him. When he heals you, and forgives you, you will love him forever. He is worthy of all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise.

Luke Chapter 8

Luke 8:1-3

Here was an example of when women were included in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. From the beginning the Lord Jesus included men and women in the work of the gospel. The apostle Paul later expounded on this in his letters and it would benefit churches, men, and women greatly to study what Paul says to men, women, and the role we each take in family, work, and in the church. These women accompanied the Lord Jesus and ministered to him out of their resources. However, all of the twelve apostles of the Lord were men. There were different roles. How difficult it would be for those apostles if the women were not there performing their role. The apostles were not better than these women. It was the women the Lord Jesus first appeared to after his resurrection. The Lord honored women many times in the Bible. There were women mentioned in his genealogy. Here were women, mentioned by name, recorded in the gospel account. There was a woman named Mary who anointed the Lord Jesus for his burial and he said her story would always be told anywhere the gospel was proclaimed. My point is this: those in the world who say that Christianity is against women are wrong. Christianity is the greatest thing that ever happened for women. It is the Lord who showed the world the value and the beauty and the importance of women.

We all have different roles as men and women. We are different. God created us different. There are men, and there are women, and we are separate, different, and important in each of our own roles.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 8:4-15

It is true that not everyone will benefit from hearing the word of God. The Lord Jesus taught in his parable that people hear the word according to what was already in their heart. In order to hear God's word in such a way that brings fruit our heart must be prepared. We should pray and ask the Lord to give us a heart that can hear his word and can receive and keep the word and that can then produce fruit in our life. The goal of God's word in us is to bear fruit through us to benefit others. God's word is like a seed planted in the ground. The purpose of that seed is to be planted, to die in the earth, and then to resurrect with life in order to bring forth life for others. This is what we see in the life of Jesus. He gave himself upon Calvary so through his death and resurrection we can receive eternal life by faith in him.

Not everyone who heard the Lord speak could understand what he said. Some heard the Lord with joy but lost the word because the enemy came and stole it away. Others heard and received but produced nothing because of hardship and suffering. Others did not benefit because they were distracted by the world system. The cares of life choked the word. Others heard God's word in a good heart and produced fruit. There was a one in four chance of bearing fruit when hearing the word. It took a humble and obedient heart to benefit from hearing the word.

I think one purpose in telling parables was to actually protect people from being accountable for knowing things they would never believe. The more a person understands about the Bible the more accountable they become. I pray that what I learn from God I will obey and put into practice. I pray I can bear the fruit which God looks for in the life he gave me.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved.

Luke 8:16-18

The Lord wants us to share with others what he gave us. We should share our testimony of how the Lord Jesus Christ saved us. Along with that testimony be careful to share the scriptures which show other people how they can be saved. I always share **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** and also **Romans 10:9-13** with people. These are basic scriptures which outline the gospel and how to be saved.

The gospel in our hearts is a bright shining light. However, if we never open our mouth and share the word with others then we are hiding the light. At some point we need to be bold and share the Lord Jesus with other people. We need to let other people know we are Christians, we love the Lord, and let other people know how they can be saved. Without the word of God there is no way a person can move from darkness into the light.

I had people when I was a young man who were faithful to share God's word with me. I had my mom, a teacher in high school, and several people I worked with in different jobs who were faithful to the Lord and shared the gospel with me.

I'm thankful for the years I had when I was a young Christian to share my testimony with people. I had the chance to share my testimony with churches, schools, in jails, in prisons, and on the streets. Those were glorious days for me. I let my light shine day after day.

We go through different seasons in life when we are more active letting our light shine. My hope and my prayer is that I may inspire you today to let your light shine for Jesus. Let us make the best use of the opportunity we have to witness, share God's word, and proclaim the good news that Jesus saves!

Luke 8:19-21

This was also recorded in **Matthew 12:46-50** and **Mark 3:31-35**. The fact that this specific incident was repeated three times in the gospels show there was an important truth here. What was important in this? The natural family of the Lord Jesus was contrasted with the spiritual family of those who hear and obey God.

The most painful lesson in my life took place in the context of family. Most of the people in my family do not know the Lord Jesus. Over an extended period of time of many years I shared scripture, the gospel, and my testimony with each one of them. I did this as the occasion arose and also in a systematic fashion.

As I've gotten older I realize the best thing I can do is pray for them. I see our roads are slowly but surely separating from one another. A spiritual reality is taking shape in front of my eyes. I can only explain this by putting it into the form of a metaphor. It is like walking down a road. When you are young you walk on the road with people in your family. However, when you are born into the family of God you start walking a different road than people in your natural family. Someone who is truly born again will have an intense desire to bring his natural family into this spiritual road. I remember this was an intense longing for me when I was young. I spent long periods of prayer when I cried and wept and prayed for my family.

Over decades I've seen the hardness of unbelief confirm them in the concrete of self worship and turning their back on the living God. It truly gives me pain. I cannot bear to continue to keep up some kind of pretend relationship with them. They refuse to relate to you on the basis of truth and think you hate them because they can't understand why you cannot agree to relate to them on the basis of their delusions and deceit.

The Lord Jesus never gave in to this. He refused to relate to his family on the basis of their opinions or thoughts or feelings. His relationship with everyone was based on truth. If anyone rejected the truth he could not reach them. He is the Truth. When Jesus lives in your heart the truth lives in you. You can no longer walk on the same road as those who do not believe in the Bible. It is impossible. It is not because you don't want to or because you hate your family. It is because there is a literal, spiritual wall that is growing thicker and taller and wider and it cannot be crossed.

How can two walk together unless they be agreed?

Luke 8:22-25

The Lord Jesus demonstrated his authority over the raging seas. The Lord Jesus is King over all creation. Jesus Christ is God. He is the Savior, and he is the Lord, and he is the King. He demonstrated his authority and power over creation.

Notice the Lord Jesus told his disciples they would go to the other side of the lake. If they listened to him then they would not have thought that they would perish. They would have known that no matter what the circumstances appear that they would make it to the other side. Some people teach that the Lord Jesus rebuked them for a lack of faith because he expected them to rebuke the seas. I don't believe that. Instead, I think he rebuked them for not remembering what he said. He said they were going to the other side. The Lord Jesus was the one who rebuked the sea. They did right going to him for help but their attitude of fear had to be corrected. We should go to God in our difficult situations in life, but go to God with faith. Go to the Lord like the Shunammite woman, and say, "*All is well.*"

God is in control of the raging seas. He reigns as King over the flood. He reigns as King forever.

Luke 8:26-39

After crossing the sea the Lord Jesus and his disciples landed where they met a man who was possessed by a legion of demons. The Lord Jesus demonstrated his authority over the powers of darkness by driving out this legion of demons. The demons went into a herd of pigs and drowned in the sea. The man was thankful and wanted to follow the Lord Jesus but the Lord told him to go home and tell his family how God had mercy on him.

What always stands out to me in this account is how Jesus exposes the system which the powers of darkness use. Jesus demanded to know their name. They said "Legion" because there were great numbers of them. Through this we understand the system the powers of darkness use is based on making a name for themselves and bringing numbers underneath a name they create. This is also seen in the account of the tower of Babel and is also exposed by the Lord Jesus when he said the Antichrist would come "in his own name". This is the basis for how the world system operates. Men exalt their names and bring numbers of men under their name to create satanic power. This satanic power provides

them with provision and protection and portion independently from God. The world system is a counterfeit of the attributes of God.

I look forward to the day when the Lord Jesus will drive out every demon off this earth. One day all of the powers of darkness in the air will be driven out and the atmosphere will be completely cleansed from their influence. I look forward to God's Kingdom coming on this earth. I look forward to God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Luke 8:40-56

The Lord Jesus and his disciples returned from across the sea. They were welcomed back and the Lord Jesus was approached by Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue. He asked the Lord Jesus to save his daughter because she was dying. On the way to help Jairus the Lord Jesus encountered a woman who touched the hem of his robe and was healed from a bleeding disease. She was healed immediately. At first the Lord Jesus didn't know exactly who touched him but she came forward and made a full confession. The Lord Jesus said her faith made her whole and to go in peace. He continued on with Jairus and raised the little girl from the dead. The Lord Jesus insisted that she was sleeping and was not dead, but he also said this about Lazarus who was clearly dead. When Jesus spoke to the little girl her spirit returned so it was clear she was dead, even though Jesus said she slept. The early church used this same way of describing physical death as "sleeping". The Lord Jesus raised the little girl from the dead and gave her back to her parents. The Lord requested that they keep this incident quiet and not talk about it.

The main idea I get from this passage is that Jesus has authority over life and death. He is the giver of all life. The Lord Jesus said he is the resurrection and the life. There are several examples in the gospels where the Lord Jesus raised someone from the dead. This girl was one example. Lazarus was an example. There was also a young man from Nain whom the Lord raised from the dead. Probably there were other examples that occurred where the Lord Jesus raised people from the dead. In my opinion, I think the Lord still raises some people from the dead. There are a lot of testimonies you can listen to online where people died, had an encounter with the Lord, and then returned to life to tell others about heaven, or hell, or a message from the Lord.

The entire Christian faith rests upon the fact of the resurrection from the dead. Read **1 Corinthians 15**. Paul made it clear that our faith rested upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. If people cannot be raised from the dead, or if there was no after life, then there is no Christian faith. But, hallelujah, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. There is plenty of evidence in the Bible for this, and there is historical evidence that a person can research if they are interested.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be saved today.

Luke Chapter 9

Luke 9:1-6

The Lord Jesus sent out his twelve apostles to preach, proclaim, drive out devils, and heal sick people. He gave them specific instructions on what equipment to use, where to stay, and how to respond to people who rejected their ministry. The Lord did not leave out any details when he instructed his apostles in their ministry.

My take here is that I need to be ready to receive specific instructions from the Lord on how to conduct myself, on how to serve in ministry, and how to live for him. He is my provider, my protection, and my portion forever. Therefore I should listen to his instructions even when it comes to such mundane things as equipment used in ministry and how to conduct myself in ministry.

This principle holds for the faith of the Christian. We should live in accordance with God's instructions to us through the Holy Bible. We are to carefully read the instructions in the New Testament on how we should live and then conform our lives to those instructions.

The following passages provide some straight forward instructions on Christian living: **Romans 12-15, Galatians 5:16-26, Ephesians 4:17-6:9, Philippians 4:4-9, Colossians 3-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, 2 Thessalonian 3:6-15, Titus 2-3, James (the entire book)**. These are just samples. There is a lot more in the New Testament, including the teachings of the Lord Jesus in the gospel accounts.

Luke 9:7-9

Herod killed John the Baptist. He heard rumors about the Lord Jesus and was told this might be John the Baptist risen from the dead, or it might be Elijah come back from heaven, or it might be one of the other prophets. Notice how people in those days believed the same kind of things people do today. They believed people could rise from the dead. This was seen clearly in the ministry of the Lord Jesus because he raised people from the dead. The widow's son from Nain, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus were just three examples I can think of.

Herod was perplexed. This is how the world feels about Christians. They are perplexed. This explains the anger, the mocking, the minimizing and unbelief. You can't really put a Christian into a box, but unbelievers do this non-stop. They can't be happy until they have labeled and categorized a Christian. Why? Because Christians perplex them. It causes unbelievers mental anguish to think about Christians. Almost always the world reacts to Christians with a negative response. Rarely do you find someone who does not believe in God who has something positive to say about Christians. When you do, it is because they are trying to pretend they are magnanimous in order to feel good about themselves.

Herod was perplexed. I've suffered for a long time with the confusion of other people around me. Unbelievers just do not know what to do with a real Christian. They can feel the spiritual life in the Christian. They can smell the fragrance of the Lord in the Holy Spirit filled Christian. It is not an aroma they like very much. It reminds them that they are going to die. It reminds them they will give an account for all of their sins. It reminds them they have appointment with God to keep.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 9:10-17

When the apostles returned to the Lord Jesus after their missionary journey he brought them aside privately to a desert place near Bethsaida. However, the general population heard of his location and came out to him. He taught them about the kingdom of God and he healed people. Eventually the disciples came to the Lord Jesus and asked him to send the crowds away so they could get food and

shelter. The Lord Jesus turned this around and told the disciples to give the crowd food. They protested and said they only had five loaves and two fishes. The Lord Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down in groups of fifty. Once this was done the Lord Jesus took the bread and fish, blessed it, and with it he fed all of those five thousand people, and there were twelve baskets of food left over which the disciples collected.

There are multiple thoughts and lessons which we can glean from this account of the Lord Jesus feeding the five thousand people. One thought I have, first of all, is a simple fact: God is my Provider. The Lord Jesus is my Provider. **Psalm 23:1**, "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*".

The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the Father and say, "Give us this day our daily bread." God is our provider. He gives us everything we need in order to live on this earth. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things (material things we need for life) would be added to us.

Another thought I have is that those who were in the ministry serving the Lord Jesus did not really have much compassion for the people. They wanted them to go away. Perhaps this lack of compassion arises from a lack of faith. They did not see the five loaves and two fish as enough food to feed the multitude of people. However, in the hands of the Lord Jesus, that little bit of food became enough to feed that entire multitude of people. When we give the Lord Jesus what we have then he can take it and multiply it and feed many people. Don't ever feel like you don't have anything to offer the Lord or other people. Sometimes just a word of encouragement or comfort can make all the difference.

This account described a miracle of God's provision. Do you need a miracle today? Do you need God to provide a need in your life? Ask the Lord Jesus and see what he will do for you.

Luke 9:18-27

The Lord Jesus asked his disciples who the people said he was. His disciples replied that some thought he was John the Baptist, or that he was one of the prophets of old returned. The Lord Jesus then asked them who they thought he was. Peter replied that the Lord Jesus was the Christ. When he made this confession the Lord Jesus instructed his disciples not to tell anyone. He then predicted he would be handed over to die and that he would rise again on the third day. He taught his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. He taught them if they wanted to gain life then they should lose their life for his sake. He taught them if anyone was ashamed of him and his words he would be ashamed of them before the heavenly Father and the angels. He concluded by saying that some of the disciples present would see him coming in his kingdom.

A man has a choice to worship the Lord or to worship himself. If he worships the Lord then he must deny himself and take up his cross. The Lord Jesus showed us the way to live for God. It is by giving away our life for God. In the Lord's case this literally meant that he would die on the cross. For us, many times this means we live for the Lord Jesus instead of living for ourselves. In the same way that Abraham offered Isaac to God we are to offer our heart and lives to God. We should be willing to go all the way with God and die if that is the will of God. As far as Abraham was concerned Isaac was dead but God raised him from the dead in a figure. He stopped him from offering his son and instead God offered his only begotten Son Jesus Christ in our place. God provided himself as the Lamb.

The impact of this upon us was to set us free from living for ourselves. If we only live for self then in the end we will lose everything. We will be castaway. Look at that word "castaway" here.

Luke 9:25, *"For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"*

Men who do not follow the Lord Jesus dedicate their entire lives to gaining the world. They live their entire life according to the principles of the world system, hoping for provision, hoping for protection, hoping for prestige and glory. But what do they get? In the end they lose their life. When they stand before God they will have nothing but vanity to show for themselves.

The only way to live is to die to self and instead live for the Lord Jesus Christ. Follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Humble yourself and be obedient to death even the death of the cross.

Luke 9:28-36

This account of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus was recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This was a significant event in the life of the Lord Jesus. Peter later mentioned this again in his epistle. This was a life changing experience for the disciples. The Lord Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him up on the mountain to pray. While he was there he was changed. His face was changed and he glowed with a heavenly white light. While he was there two men appeared in glory with the Lord Jesus. These men were Moses and Elijah. In my opinion, these two men were the same ones there when the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, and will be the two witnesses in the book of Revelation. I also think they might have been the two men at the tomb of the Lord Jesus when he was resurrected.

Peter suggested the creation of three tents, one for the Lord Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Somehow he knew who these men were without having met them previously. This gives us a clue as to how things will be in the kingdom of God. We will know each other. We will know the Lord and we will know one another. A cloud appeared and the voice of God the Father spoke, proclaiming that the Lord Jesus was God's beloved Son and to hear him. Listen to the Lord Jesus! Listen to the Lord Jesus! This is what we are called to do. We are called to hear the voice of the Lord. This was the advantage of someone like Mary over her sister Martha. She had the spiritual discernment to know what was the most important thing to do. May God give us the discernment to know what is the best thing we can do with the life we have been given. Listen to the Lord Jesus.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 9:37-45

When the Lord Jesus and his disciples came down from the mountain of transfiguration they were confronted with a father who had a son possessed by devils. This father had already asked the Lord's disciples to help him and they were unable to cast out the devils from this boy.

I'm not sure who the Lord Jesus was rebuking when he said "faithless and perverse generation" but I assume this was directed at the disciples who were unable to help the man.

Even in the presence of the Lord these devils tried to act up but the Lord Jesus rebuked them, cast them out, and healed the boy completely. He then gave the boy back to his father. Everyone there was amazed at the mighty power of God displayed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right at that moment the Lord Jesus turned to his disciples and told them that the Son of Man would be delivered into the hands of men. Why did he say this? I think he tried to wake them up to get serious about their spiritual walk. He would only be with them a short season of time. He had a mission to go to Calvary and had only a short time to teach them.

He rebuked them to make them humble themselves and get serious about their spiritual life. The Lord Jesus rebuked the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 in a similar manner. He said that everyone he loved he chastened and rebuked. We are to be zealous for the Lord and repent.

It is possible for a Christian to go a long time without any spiritual power in his life. Instead of living in spiritual defeat the Lord Jesus called us to get rid of all compromise in our life. He wants us to have a red hot burning faith in God and to get rid of all compromise. We may need to fast and pray to build this spiritual fire in our life. In another places where this same story was retold the Lord Jesus told his disciples that some demons can only come out by prayer and fasting.

Rid your life of all compromise. Remember to lay aside every weight and every sin which so easily besets you. Do not be like Israel at the foot of the mountain waiting for Moses to come back. Do not give in to the flesh but instead walk in the Spirit as you wait each day upon the Lord. Do not give in to impatience. Do not allow yourselves to give in to discouragement or unbelief. He that will come will come and will not delay. Cast not away your confidence today. Endure until the end.

Luke 9:46-50

The natural man compares himself with his peers to see if he is better than others. This is natural human nature. Comparison leads to pride or envy. It leads to strife and division. In God's kingdom there is no strife, or envy, or division. How is this accomplished? The one who is least of all is the greatest. The weak, the base, and those who are nobody are chosen by God.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."*

The natural human desire of wanting to be great caused people to want to exclude others. Whereas the Lord Jesus says "come unto me" it was the attitude of natural man to say "go away" and to exclude people. This is what we see happening in the next verses where the disciples tried to stop someone else from participating in ministry work because they were not part of their group of disciples. This attitude is still with us today. It is why, in my opinion, so many people leave the church and never come back. They find no place where they can participate and express the gifts which God gave them.

We need a radical change in our church culture. We need to see things from the perspective of God's kingdom. Those who are least among us are the greatest. We should not seek to exalt the names of men.

We should not seek to elevate men with titles and positions. Instead, we should all pull up a chair in a circle and seek to edify and exhort and comfort one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Luke 9:51-56

The Lord Jesus rebuked his disciples for asking if they should call down fire from heaven and destroy a village. The Lord Jesus told them that he did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. The Lord Jesus saves lives. They did not understand his mission at all. This showed that his own disciples who were with him for those three years of ministry did not really perceive his true mission and goal.

The Samaritans resisted the direction which the Lord Jesus headed. They put up a roadblock. His disciples did not understand his mission and they offered alternatives which were contrary to his purpose. However, the Lord Jesus continued to go forward in obedience to his heavenly Father.

Underline the phrase "when the time was come that he should be received up". What does this mean? A simple application here is that there is a season for everything in our lives. In the life of the Lord Jesus he had one short season to accomplish all God wanted to accomplish through him. He did God's will. His mission was to save lives. This is still his mission today, and it is the mission of the church as well. We are the hands and feet and mouth of the Lord Jesus on this earth. We are to preach the gospel so that men can be saved.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 9:57-62

The Lord Jesus talked to three different people about discipleship. He was approached by two people and one person he approached.

In the first case a man offered to follow the Lord, but the Lord told him that he lived like a homeless man. Does the man still want to follow? The Lord challenges us to consider how he lived and count the cost. Are we willing to suffer like he did in order to be his disciple?

In the second case the Lord Jesus exhorted someone to follow him. But the person made an excuse related to family obligations. The Lord Jesus told him to let the dead bury the dead but for him to go and preach the kingdom of God. Interesting how the Lord called people "dead" in this verse. I think this is echoed later in Paul's letter when he said that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. In other words, unbelievers in this world system have their place and their job. Let them do what they do. But our goal and purpose is to obey the Lord and preach the gospel.

In the third case another person volunteered to follow the Lord Jesus but with certain conditions. He also wanted to fulfill some kind of family issue. The Lord Jesus told him that no man who put his hand to the plough and looked back was fit for the kingdom of God. In this case we see that to serve the Lord we must be wholehearted and not look back. Remember Lot's wife. She looked back and lost out.

We should seriously consider each one of these conversations and ask ourselves if this applies to us. Are we making excuses for not following the Lord with our whole heart? Are we truly living as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Examine yourselves to see if you are really in the faith or not.

Luke Chapter 10

Luke 10:1-11

The Lord appointed seventy disciples and sent them out two by two to cities he would soon visit. He gave them specific instructions on how to travel, how to act, and how to conduct the work of the ministry. It began with prayer. The Lord Jesus said for them to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

This is a verse I've tried for years to remember to include in my daily prayers to the Lord. Lord, I pray that you would send forth laborers into the harvest to seek and to save those who are lost. It is a good thing to remember in prayer and it is a good thing to remember in our life as a Christian. When we pray this it will also remind us that we are his ambassadors. We are sent forth by the Lord to our families, workplace, churches, and the community we live in to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

The Lord Jesus taught the disciples to serve others and accept help from people. His disciples lived and ate and slept where people made them welcome. If a city did not listen to their message they gave an anti-testimony to that city. In the next section we see how the Lord Jesus pronounced woe upon cities which rejected the message of the gospel.

Their message was this: the kingdom of God is near.

The same is true today. God's kingdom is near. We should live in view of the return of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of his kingdom over all the nations of the earth.

Luke 10:12-16

The Lord Jesus pronounced woe upon cities where the disciples preached and taught the word. Why did he pronounce woes? Because they heard him preaching. The Son of God preached in their cities. The Lord Jesus was not just another prophet or teacher. He was and is the Son of God and God the Son. He was not just another religious teacher visiting their cities. As a result, when they rejected him and did not listen to him they earned a much more severe punishment. The more light we have the more accountable we become to God.

Think of the light which Moses had. As a result of the light which he had from God he was much more accountable. All it took was one time disobeying God's command and Moses lost his chance to enter the promised land. Think about that.

We have greater light in the New Testament. We have the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray and ask the Lord to help you to hear, receive, believe, and obey the Lord. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Luke 10:17-24

The disciples returned from their missions trip and reported in with the Lord Jesus about all they did on their mission. They were excited because they had experienced the authority and power of the Lord Jesus to drive out devils. The Lord Jesus said he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Then he told his disciples that they had power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and that nothing would hurt them. This reference to serpents and scorpions reminds me of another verse in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 8:15, *"Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;"*

Perhaps the Lord was referring back to this passage. The application of this, however, no doubt points to the authority of the believer in the Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. We have authority in the name of Jesus Christ to drive out the devil. As scripture says in **James 4:7**, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

We do not need to fear the enemy. The enemy was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. The Lord Jesus was crucified, he died, and he was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead and defeated all the powers of death, hell, and the grave. The power of Satan was broken by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer slaves to sin but are now slaves of righteousness unto holiness with the result of everlasting life in Jesus.

The Lord Jesus told them not to rejoice in this power over demons but rather rejoice because their names were written down in heaven.

Let us rejoice today in our salvation. We have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. We have been purchased and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ through his finished and completed work.

Luke 10:25-37

A certain lawyer asked the Lord Jesus how he could inherit eternal life. The Lord Jesus pointed him to the law of God. The man replied correctly. Love God and love your neighbor. The Lord Jesus confirmed that if he did this he would have eternal life.

For some reason the man wanted to justify himself. He wanted to defend himself. Why? Perhaps he was under conviction. Perhaps his conscience bothered him and he tried to reason away the uneasy feeling in his conscience.

If the Lord Jesus told me the only way I could inherit eternal life was by obeying God's law I would feel very uneasy as well. This is the purpose of God's law: to show us how sinful we really are. No doubt this was the effect upon this man. He tried to defend himself against the obvious fact that he did not love God or his neighbor.

Notice that the Lord Jesus always gave the law to people who tried to justify themselves? But for those who were broken he showed grace and compassion. When this man tried to justify himself and ask "who is my neighbor?" Jesus told him the parable of the good Samaritan.

The purpose of the parable was to demonstrate what love for one's neighbor looks like. It crosses over racial, ethnic, and language barriers. Who is my neighbor? My neighbor is anyone I come into contact with who needs my help. To love your neighbor means to be ready to help anyone in your life who asks for your help or obviously needs your help. Love for neighbor does not take into consideration race, religion, language, or ethnic background. Love will try to help someone, even if that person is your moral or racial or religious enemy. The Lord Jesus said we are to love our enemies and bless those who curse us.

When the Lord Jesus asked the man who the true neighbor was in the parable the man answered correctly. The one who showed mercy. Now, this man had no excuses left. The law of God exposed his sinful human nature plainly and revealed our need for the Savior Jesus Christ. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can give us eternal life. It is a gift from God to us through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We trust in Jesus Christ and his finished and completed work upon Calvary. Jesus Christ died for our sins upon the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 10:38-42

In these brief verses we are introduced to two women and who are set in contrast. Mary wanted to sit and listen to the Lord Jesus. However, Martha was busy with activity. Her activity was no doubt honorable and good. She was taking care of needs, serving food, and ministering to people. However, she stopped and noticed her sister was not helping. She asked the Lord Jesus to correct Mary but instead the Lord Jesus corrected Martha.

There is a spiritual lesson in this contrast between Mary and Martha. I think what we see here is a contrast between the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith and that of a works based, man-centered salvation. Here we see an example of Mary who is hearing, receiving, and believing the word of God. On the other hand, Martha might be listening but she cannot receive because she is busy with her own thoughts and actions. She is preoccupied with good works and striving to serve in the flesh. This is a contrast of two people in the house of God. One is striving in the flesh to live for God. The other is walking by faith and living in the Spirit and who simply believes God's word.

The Lord Jesus commended Mary and said she chose "that good part". He said that it would not be taken away from her. Here we see an indication that our salvation is secure in the Lord Jesus. It cannot be taken away from us. We did not work for it nor did we earn it. We simply heard the word of God and received and believed the word of God. No one can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God. Nothing can take us out of God's hands.

This distinction in the house of God between the flesh and the spirit goes all the way through the Bible from the time of Cain and Abel all the way through the New Testament. There is a constant discerning between that which is of the flesh and that which is of the Spirit. This is seen in the work of the priest in the Old Testament. They were to teach the people to discern between what is holy and what is profane. God's word is like a sharp sword that cuts asunder between soul and spirit. It is important to allow God's word to deliver us from our flesh self life and teach us to live according to the Spirit. Only the word of God can do this. That is why we must hear, receive, and believe the word of God. There is no other way to walk in the Spirit.

Here is a good Bible verse that summarizes this idea of God's word separating between flesh, soul, and spirit.

Hebrews 4:12, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

Allow the word of God to search you and set you free from self, sin, the world, and the devil. God's word will set you free also from death itself. God's word inside of you gives eternal life, and will cause you to rise up and declare the works of the Lord. I shall not die but I will live and declare the works of the Lord.

Receive God's word today. Believe in God's word. Abide in his word and continue to walk in his word every single day. Just like Israel, you must seek your bread every single day. Collect it, process it, and ingest the bread of life. It is your life. It is your bread and the living water for your soul.

Luke Chapter 11

Luke 11:1-13

The disciples of the Lord Jesus watched him pray. They listened to him and observed him in prayer to his heavenly Father. As a result they were inspired to pray themselves but felt inadequate. They asked the Lord Jesus to teach them how to pray as John the Baptist also taught his disciples. Perhaps this disciple previously was a disciple of John the Baptist?

The Lord answered this request and not only provided an example model prayer but also encouraged his disciples to have faith when they pray and to persist in praying to God. He gave them an example of how evil men will give to their friends. Or how human parents, even though they are evil, give to their children. The point was how much more does God our Father answer our prayers? The Lord answers our prayers. He is listening for us to pray. The Lord Jesus encourages us to ask, seek, and knock and we will receive from our heavenly Father.

I've heard atheists say they tried God at one time. He did not answer their prayers and so they gave up on him. The problem with this approach is simple. They did not believe in God to start with. Scripture teaches us that anyone who comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. If you don't believe you will never receive anything from God. What this atheist did was tempt God, which is breaking God's law. They are fortunate God did not answer their prayers by striking them down for their unbelief.

The Lord provided a model example prayer for us. I've followed this model prayer for a long time when I pray. It is good to memorize this prayer, because within this prayer is everything we need to pray about. We are encouraged to ask for God to forgive us. We are taught to pray for our daily needs. We are taught to pray that we can escape from evil. Within this prayer we learn that God is our provider, God is our protector, and God is our portion forever. God is our Father who is in heaven. We should pray that his kingdom come and that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Lord will answer this prayer. He promised that his kingdom will come to this earth. His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. When we pray this we are praying according to the will of God and he hears this prayer and will answer it.

Let us pray that we will be a part of his kingdom. When we pray for his kingdom to come let us pray that we may be found worthy to be a participant in his kingdom.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your faith in Jesus. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 11:14-26

The Lord Jesus cast out a devil that caused a person to be unable to speak. The word "dumb" was used, which means the inability to speak. Once the devil was cast out of the person he was able to speak. The people wondered when they saw this. It doesn't say they believed in the Lord Jesus but that they "wondered". Then there was another group there who attacked the Lord Jesus when he cast out devils. They tried to tempt him and demanded that he show them a sign from heaven. They accused him of casting out devils by the power of the devil.

The Lord Jesus responded when he said that a house or a kingdom which is divided against itself cannot stand. In other words it was not possible to cast out devils with the power of the devil. These people thought the Lord Jesus deceived them with satanic power but in reality he cast out devils by the Spirit of God. These people did not want to believe in the Lord Jesus. Those who did not want to believe in the Lord Jesus were on the side of the lie which is the devil. The people on the devil's side accused the Lord Jesus of casting out devils by the power of the devil. Notice how subtle the devil is. He is the accuser of the brethren. However, the Lord Jesus exposed their hypocrisy with a logical argument. How can a house or kingdom divided against itself stand?

He went on to illustrate his point when he said that a man's house cannot be broken into unless you tie up the owner of the house first. The owner of a house is called a "strongman". The strongman must be first dealt with then the strongman's house can be robbed. The idea was that it would be impossible for the Lord Jesus to cast out a devil by the power of Satan. That would be like the owner of a house helping a thief rob his own house. It doesn't make sense. Their accusation had no logical basis but it did not stop them. The devil rarely uses logic and if he does it is a twisted logic taking scriptures out of context or through constant repetition. There are many lies that people believe. They believe lies not because of evidence or logic but because of constant repetition. An example of this is Darwin's lie of evolution. It has no basis in science or logic but has been repeated so much people accept it as truth. This is also why propaganda is successful. It doesn't matter what the lie may be. Just keep repeating it over and over and people will believe it out of exhaustion.

The Lord Jesus gave us a brief glimpse into the invisible spiritual world. The Lord Jesus said that when an unclean devil was cast out it traveled through "dry places" and sought rest but it could not find rest so it wanted to return to where it was cast out. Not only did it return but it would bring seven more evil spirits with it. Why? Perhaps it thought it could gain its home back again by sheer weight of numbers? I think this is a good guess. I think a lot of the power of devils lies in the multiplication of numbers. You see this principle active in the world system of politics and business. The more people you bring underneath someone's name, the more numbers you have, the more power and influence you

accumulate. This works in politics and also in the business world. It is also very active in the outward external church which bases success on how many numbers of people can be added to a church.

If someone was delivered from devils they needed to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior immediately. They needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and renounce all their sin which led to the infestation of devils. Any ground or right the devils had needed to be broken through the confession of sin and heart felt repentance before God.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let your heart and mind be soaked and filled with the word of God. Stay in God's word, and stay in prayer. Pray without ceasing. Read, study, meditate on, memorize and obey the word of God. Walk in the spirit and not in the flesh.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 11:27-28

After he dealt with the opposition of the religious leaders it would be refreshing to hear something positive. A woman from the crowd told the Lord Jesus that his mother was blessed for having him. The Lord Jesus turned around and said a person who heard and kept God's word was blessed. This was an interesting reply and it is worth consideration.

This woman was an early example of what we know today as Catholics. They put emphasis on the mother of the Lord Jesus. This has been a common theme in world religions since the tower of Babel and the mystery religions. This emphasis on the Queen of Heaven and the worship of a mother goddess is a thread which runs all through pagan religions and is one of the foremost symptoms of paganism in the Catholic church.

Mary said that people would call her blessed. Here the Lord Jesus said that anyone who heard God's word and obeyed God's word was blessed. The Lord Jesus probably knew the danger of people worshipping his mother. It was idolatry to worship any person other than the Lord Jesus Christ. When we lift up any person other than the Lord Jesus we become guilty of idolatry. This is why it is so dangerous to give men titles and lift up the names of men. It is man's instinct to worship self and as a result to also worship the names of men. Repent of this! It leads to strife, division, envy, and all kind of sin. It was the main reason why there were so many divisions in the outward church.

Do not be followers after the names of men (or women!). Instead, simply hear God's word and keep it. Walk in obedience to God's word. Do not be followers of men, but instead be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Walk in the spirit and not in the flesh. Walk by faith and not by sight.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 11:29-36

The Lord Jesus said that an evil generation looked for a sign. This reminds me of how the man who was in hell asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them about hell. What did Abraham say? If they do not believe the Bible they will not believe the message even if someone rose from the

dead to testify. People who seek for signs usually are unbelievers. They do not believe the testimony we have before us in the word of God. Some of these people are religious and may know scripture but do not believe. The fulfillment of Bible prophecy stood before them. The Messiah prophesied in the scripture stood before them and they did not believe in him.

The sign of the prophet Jonah was the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and nights, so also the Lord Jesus was in the belly of the earth three days and three nights and then arose from the dead.

God Most High resurrects from the dead. One day everyone who has died will be resurrected and stand before their creator. It is appointed to men once to die and after this the judgment awaits us.

We need to put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus, his words, his gospel, his finished and completed work upon Calvary. Through what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection we have received forgiveness of sins and redemption. All of our sins have been washed away. We have been redeemed. We are saved. Believe the word. Receive the word. Obey the word of the Lord.

Luke 11:37-54

The Lord Jesus accepted an invitation to eat at the house of a Pharisee. While he was there the Lord Jesus perceived that his host was hostile toward him because Jesus did not wash his hands before he ate. From this the Lord Jesus began to rebuke these Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers. He rebuked with all long suffering and authority. He was careful to point out exactly in what way they were deceiving themselves. Their focus was on outward, external religion but their hearts were filled with evil. The Lord Jesus could see into their heart and he knew they were religious hypocrites. He told them what they were. What was the purpose for this? It was to bring men to repentance. The Lord Jesus said these things not for the purpose of offending people but for the purpose of bringing them to repentance and faith in the living God.

He warned them they would be accountable, not only for their sins, but also for the sins of their forefathers, because they walked in the same pattern as their forefathers. Their fathers killed the prophets and they built their tombs. The Lord Jesus said they approved of what their fathers did.

We should think about this. Consider this deeply. Do we blindly follow the traditions of those who have gone before us, and never evaluate whether or not we are following truth? It is easy to follow the traditions of those who have gone before us. But what if they were wrong? What if what they did was actually against the Lord like those who killed the prophets?

I think we would be amazed to hear what the Lord would say about our outward religion in these last days. Let us pray and ask the Lord to search our hearts and grant us repentance that we may escape every trap of the devil.

Luke Chapter 12

Luke 12:1-3

The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to get rid of all hypocrisy. He warned them that whatever they thought was secret in their lives, whatever secret sin they thought they were hiding, was not hidden from the eyes of God. The Lord will shine his light upon us and expose us for the hypocrites that we are. He will make sure that we are exposed if we will not humble ourselves, and repent, and get the sin out of our life. Be sure your sin will find you out!

This was the sin which the Lord Jesus constantly warned about in the lives of the religious leaders. He rebuked the Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers because of hypocrisy. He did not rebuke them for doing good deeds or for knowing scripture. He rebuked them because everything they did was for a show. They loved the praise of men rather than the praise of God. Everything they did was for their own name, their own reputation, their own position, their own title. Their life was a stage production for others to praise them. Not only this but they did serious harm to other people because they did not teach God's word correctly. They laid burdens upon people and did not lift a finger to help them.

Hypocrisy sneaks in when we are blind to our attitudes, words, and actions. We become blind because of pride. The man who is poor and has nothing will have less problem with this. What has he to be proud of? He does not have reputation, or title, or position. But pride can still be found in poverty as well. Proud to be poor. Beware of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy makes us think we are serving God when we are really only serving ourselves. Hypocrisy makes us think we are worshiping God when in reality we are worshiping ourselves. Beware of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is like leaven in flour. It will corrupt and change everything in our lives. Even what we do that is good will become evil. Our good works will be done with bad motives. Our Bible study, prayers, and church attendance will all become corrupt and only serve to make us self righteous and think we are better than other people. Beware of hypocrisy. It is self deception. It is self delusion. It is self worship.

Cry out to the Lord and ask him to open your eyes so you can see your sin in the light of who God is. Pray and ask God to shine the light on your hypocrisy, and compromise, and sins. Ask the Lord to help you to repent, and renounce hypocrisy and compromise.

The goal is to inherit the kingdom. Hypocrites will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Matthew 24:48-51, *"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Luke 12:4-9

The Lord Jesus clearly taught the reality of hell. He exhorted people not to be afraid of men who can only kill the body but be afraid of God who can not only kill the body but also cast the soul into hell. Also, notice the Lord Jesus taught the existence of man's soul after physical death. Here we can see profound truth of the existence beyond the physical realm of the body. However, we are taught as well to fear God who can cast the soul of a man into hell. This is to be avoided at all costs. How do we avoid being cast into hell? It is very simple. Ask God to forgive your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty that our sins deserve. He is our atonement. He is the sacrifice for our sins. Trust in his sacrifice and ask him to come into your heart and life. Believe on the Lord Jesus. Call upon the name of the Lord. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved! Saved from what? Saved from hell, my friend.

Later in these same verses the Lord Jesus said "Fear not", in the context of God's loving care over our lives. The Lord knows every single detail of our lives. If we trust in the Lord Jesus to save us then he will save our soul. Not only will he take care of the eternal future but he will also take care of us in the present. The Lord knows all of our needs.

Let us be faithful to confess the Lord Jesus before men. We have a promise that if we confess the Lord Jesus before men then he will confess us before the angels of God. There is also a warning. If we deny him he will also deny us.

The most basic way that a new Christian can confess the Lord Jesus before men is to be baptized. I would encourage any new Christian who has not yet been baptized in water to do so. Find a church who will baptize with full immersion and baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 12:10-12

The Lord Jesus taught us about the Holy Ghost in two different ways here.

First he said that all sin that men commit can be forgiven by God but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. Many people speculate as to what the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost might be. In my opinion I think it is as simple as the rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts men of their sins so that they will turn to Christ and seek forgiveness. If a man rejects the work of the Holy Spirit he will never ask for God to forgive him. As a result, he can never be forgiven because he has rejected the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit in his life. I don't think it is possible for anyone who is a Christian to ever commit this sin, because a Christian will be sensitive enough to be concerned about this issue. If you are ever concerned or upset that you might have done this then it is evident you have not committed this sin. Those who blaspheme the Holy Ghost will not feel any guilt over it. Their conscience was seared as if with a hot iron and they no longer can feel guilt about this.

The Lord Jesus also taught that the Holy Ghost was active in the life of the believer to enable him to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus promised us the Holy Ghost would give us the right

words to say when we have an opportunity to witness for Jesus, especially in high stress situations like those who are persecuted or are in danger of martyrdom. The Lord spoke through his disciples and put into their mouth his word. This reminds me of Paul's testimony that even though everyone abandoned him the Lord stood with him and enabled him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

2 Timothy 4:16-17, *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."*

Luke 12:13-34

These scriptures point to something that anyone serious about being a disciple of the Lord Jesus needs to learn. This needs to become our lifestyle if we will be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart of these verses is a contrast between having faith in God for your needs or having an attitude like the world system in which you dedicate your heart and life to your own needs. We either trust in God or we trust in ourselves and that is the bottom line here.

This teaching began when someone asked the Lord Jesus to judge between himself and his brother over an inheritance. The Lord Jesus rebuked the man, and asked him who he thought the Lord Jesus was. The Lord Jesus made it clear that dividing property was not his purpose. Perhaps the man thought the Messiah would come to re-establish the proper boundaries of land for Israel's inheritance. I can see how a Jewish person might have thought like this. A lot of their history had to do with the physical land inheritance in the land of Israel. However, the Lord Jesus took this occasion to teach about the danger of covetousness.

He said to beware of covetousness. This is a rampant problem in the church today. I believe this strongman of covetousness controls large parts of the outward church and is the spirit behind much of the false doctrine and false gospels preached today in mega churches.

The Lord Jesus said that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of what he possesses. He taught his disciples not to allow any preoccupation in our minds with food, clothing, or our natural needs. Why? Because the cares of life would cause them to bear no fruit. God's word cannot bear fruit in the life of someone who is consumed with his own needs all the time. It is a natural human attitude to always think of ourselves and our own needs. God wants to set us free from this natural way of thinking. This is one reason God led Israel through the wilderness and fed them with manna. It was to humble them and teach them that man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God.

I believe this test of provision is fundamental in the life of the Christian and it will especially be a test of anyone God calls into full time Christian service. This test of bread will happen. I can guarantee that you will face this test of provision. The Lord Jesus faced this test in the wilderness. Turn the stones in bread, the devil said. What did Jesus say? He quoted the passage about Israel in the wilderness where they learned that a man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God.

Be prepared to face this test. Memorize **Matthew 6:33**. Remember that God will provide for your needs. **Psalms 23:1** says, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."*

You might go hungry. The Lord Jesus did. But God will provide for you. He will take care of you. It might not be in a way that you like. Israel complained about the plain light bread they got from God. They should not have done that but it shows us that at times God provides our needs in ways we don't like. Make up your mind to give thanks for whatever way God provides. Make up your mind to thank God for his provision, no matter how it comes, even if God uses your enemies to provide for you. This has happened to me before and it is very humiliating. But that is the point, right? God is humbling us, and teaching us to rely upon him.

God is teaching us not to trust in ourselves, but to trust in the Lord with all of our heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge the Lord. He will direct your paths.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Make sure your treasure is in heaven, and not on earth.

Luke 12:35-48

Here the Lord exhorted his servants to be ready for his return. The Lord Jesus taught about his return while he was with his disciples. Perhaps this was why Peter asked the Lord if this teaching was for them (the disciples) or for everyone. The Lord Jesus replied with a question. Who is the faithful and wise steward?

We are called as servants and as stewards. We are to be faithful with what the Lord has given us. We are to share with others the gospel which we have heard, received, and believed. We are to give to others what God has given to us so others can be saved as well.

The underlying message was to live with an expectation of standing before the Lord's inspection. The Lord will return. We will give an account for our lives before the Lord. The Lord is speaking to those who are his servants. Those who are in the household of faith will be called to give an account.

The Lord said that those who live in expectation of this inspection and the Lord's return would be blessed. Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. We are to occupy until the Lord returns. We are to live every day in light of God's kingdom. This is why any doctrine or message that causes us to lose sight of the future kingdom is so dangerous. Any doctrine or message that causes us to focus our heart upon the here and now and living our best life now is dangerous. It is a doctrine of the enemy to get our hearts and minds upon ourselves and to turn away our hearts from living in light of the return of Jesus Christ.

Let us cultivate a fear of the Lord and his inspection. We want to be found by the Lord as faithful servants and faithful stewards over that which he has given to us.

Also, notice the Lord made clear that the more light and knowledge of the truth we have the more accountable we become. Those who know God's will and neglect to obey God are beaten with many stripes. Not only are we to be concerned about the loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ but we should also realize there is a real possibility of discipline.

Verse 46 is shocking when we realize that he spoke to servants in the household of faith. "*The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder; and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*" I don't know the full

implication of what this means but I do know that I want to get very far away from this judgment. This kind of Bible verse puts the fear of God in my heart.

The portion which unbelievers have is this present and temporary life in the body here on earth. They have their reward in this life. Do you want your portion to be the same as that of unbelievers? Do you want to invest your life in the success that comes from the world system? If you live your life for this world then you will have your portion in this world too. You will not receive a reward or inheritance in God's kingdom.

This should put the fear of God into our hearts. We need to make some major adjustments in the way we live, and think, and our attitudes towards our relationship with the Lord and with one another. Let us learn how to invest ourselves into what will count for eternity.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day.

Romans 10:13, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Luke 12:49-53

The Lord Jesus made it clear that he divided people. People were either for him or against him. The reality of Jesus Christ should be clear to anyone who has seen this division taking place in their relationships.

I saw it myself. The more I loved the Lord Jesus the more people I once knew who did not love the Lord Jesus were repelled by me.

It is interesting how they always find a reason to hate the Christian. They tell themselves their reasons but never admit that their hatred is simply because this person is a true Christian. They can't see this because they live in darkness and love the darkness. They hate the brother or sister who walking in the light of Jesus Christ. They don't even know why they hate this Christian and come up with all kinds of reasons. They will gossip, slander, and look down their nose at the Christian.

Why? Why? The Lord Jesus showed us right here. The Lord Jesus was so real that he divided people. This is proof of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. People cannot be neutral towards the Lord Jesus Christ. When they meet someone who is full of Jesus they will love him or hate him. There is no middle ground.

This message is for brothers and sisters in Christ who mourn because of lost family members. Don't feel guilty because your family hates you. Don't feel like there is something wrong with you when they separate you from their company. The Lord Jesus Christ was treated the same way. You are not better than Jesus. Accept the suffering from your family as a normal part of your Christian life then you can rejoice. Rejoice and be glad that people turn their back on you. It is proof that the Lord Jesus Christ is shining his light through you. They hate you because you are a Christian. There is no reason to ever be ashamed of being a Christian.

1 Peter 4:16, *"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."*

The Lord Jesus is the Word of God. He divides people from one another. He separated the sheep from the goats. He separated the wheat from the tares. He separated and divided. The Lord Jesus discerned between what is holy and what is profane.

Be encouraged today. Continue to seek the Lord Jesus with all of your heart, mind, soul, and spirit. Continue to stay in God's word and in prayer. The Lord is near. Soon, we will be with our real family in the kingdom of God. Then we will never again have a family member turn their back on us again.

Luke 12:54-57

The Lord taught us that we need to discern the time we live in. He called the people who could discern the weather but not their time "hypocrites". They had an appearance of wisdom, but could not recognize the Lord Jesus himself who stood in front of them. Blindness and hypocrisy go hand in hand.

What time do we live in today? Since I was a young Christian I've prayed the Lord would help me to know the time I lived in. Not that I would be afraid but so that I could lift up my head and rejoice because my redemption draws near.

When I look around at the world today I have no doubt that the kingdom of God is near. Many prophecies in the Bible are fulfilled. The rapture of the church is not far off. The seven year tribulation is not far away. The thousand year reign of Christ is coming soon. We have a lot to look forward to.

How do we discern the time we live in? We need to study the scriptures, and then compare what the Lord Jesus said about the last days to what is happening around us.

The first thing the Lord Jesus warned about in the last days would be deception. This is happening all around us. Our media today is non-stop propaganda. It is all constant lies and deception.

Within the church there are many doctrines of devils promoted which indicates the last days are upon us. The Bible talks about a great falling away in the last days. There is an apostasy happening within the church and there is also a falling away from truth throughout the world. The world is falling away from the general revelation of God, and the church is falling away from the specific revelation of truth in the scriptures.

These doctrines of demons can be discerned, but it takes someone who walks humbly with God, who studies the scripture, and who prays for spiritual discernment. Pray and ask the Lord for wisdom. Pray and ask the Lord to lead you to solid Bible teaching.

Do not believe the lies of religious sounding people on the internet. Study the Bible yourself and look for Christians in your local area who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. Be active in sharing your faith with other people. We need to give to others what God gives to us.

Ask the Lord to help you discern the times. You need to know the day in which you are living.

We are living in the last days. Jesus is coming soon. Watch and pray. Pray that you may be found by the Lord faithfully serving the Lord Jesus.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Luke 12:58-59

I think it is plain here that the Lord Jesus taught us to keep short accounts with people. Don't get into debt. Also, don't allow yourself to be dragged into a legal battle with anyone. Settle things one on one. Settle things outside of a court where you still have control of the situation. If you allow things to deteriorate to the point of going to court then you lose control and may get into a situation over your head.

Spiritually, I think this teaches that we should be ready to admit when we are wrong and confess our sins. The adversary is Satan. He is the accuser of the brethren. Sometimes when he makes his accusations against us he is right. We do sin. We fail the Lord and we sin against other people. When this happens then agree that the accusation is true but then let us go to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. We must confess our sins, however, and acknowledge these sins. When we confess our sins then the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9. Underline this Bible verse and memorize it.

Agreeing with the adversary requires humility on our part. Whatever argument we may have with anyone is not worth going to court. It is not worth justifying yourself before God or before men. Just humble yourself and confess your sins to the Lord. Don't allow the accuser any ground to continue accusing you. Once you plead the blood of Jesus and confess your sins to God then the adversary loses all of his power.

Notice there is a progression outlined here as well. Whatever the problem is the adversary is not content until you have been brought before the judge, handed over to the officer, and then cast into a prison. The adversary wants you to suffer.

Spare yourself much pain by dealing with sin quickly. Keep short accounts. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath. Do not give the devil a foothold in your life. Close every door that the enemy might try to come through to get at you. You do this by humility, by repentance, by confessing to God. Plead the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7:25, *"Wherefore he (Jesus) is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."*

Luke Chapter 13

Luke 13:1-9

The Lord Jesus taught men that unless they repent they shall perish. People told him about a tragedy where people died. The idea was that those people must have been terrible sinners to die in such a horrific manner. However, the Lord made it clear that those who died in that manner were no more sinners than those who related the story to him.

Unless men repent they will all perish. Repent! What do we repent of? Ask the Lord, and he will show you. The Lord will put his finger on whatever there is in your life that you need to repent of. When a man came to the Lord Jesus and asked him for eternal life the Lord Jesus told him to sell everything and follow him. The man would not do it because he was rich. The Lord will tell you what you need to repent of. In my life he has been faithful to correct me. I did not always listen to the Lord, and I am thankful he had mercy on me, until I got to the point where I was humble enough to truly repent.

Anyone who refused to listen to the Lord will perish in their sins. The only hope we have is to hear the word of the Lord, repent, and believe the gospel. Believe the gospel! Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Why will you die in your sins? It is not God's will for any one to die in their sins and perish in hellfire. It is God's will for everyone to come to repentance and be saved.

Acts 17:30-31, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."*

Jesus Christ is coming back. He will judge this world in righteousness. Humble yourselves now, repent, believe the gospel. Prepare to meet thy God! He will return, as sure as day follows night, the Lord is coming back to this earth.

Psalms 50:1-4, *"The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."*

Repent or perish. The choice is yours.

Luke 13:10-17

The Lord Jesus taught in a synagogue on the Sabbath day. There was a woman bound by a spirit of infirmity eighteen years. The spirit of infirmity caused her to be "bowed together". The Lord Jesus laid his hands on the woman and immediately she was made straight. The Lord Jesus commanded her to be healed with his word "thou art loosed from thine infirmity".

The ruler of the synagogue condemned the Lord Jesus for healing the woman on a Sabbath day. The Lord pointed out that people will take care of their farm animals on a Sabbath day. They feed and water their farm animals on a Sabbath day. How much more valuable is this woman than a farm animal? He silenced his enemies in shame. They could not stand against his logic.

It is clear the devil can physically afflict people with sickness. I don't know how often we consider this when we suffer in our bodies. How often do we pray when we are sick? Is it possible that we might be suffering physically because of a spiritual problem in our life? We need to ask the Lord to shine his light on us. We need to pray that the Lord will show us any sin in our life. We need to pray and ask the Lord to expose any devils which might be causing us to suffer in our physical bodies. We know that the devil was able to cause boils upon the body of God's prophet Job. If this is possible, should we not

consider this when we are sick? Should we not pray and take authority in the name of Jesus against any unclean spirits which might be trying to make us sick?

The Lord Jesus exposed hypocrisy. When we care more about religion than we do about people there is a real problem. These people were more concerned for church decorum than the suffering of people in the church. Are we more focused on church programs than on the people within the church who are suffering? How much do we care about the people around us? Do we know their names? Do we pray for them? Do you love the people in the church?

The Lord Jesus healed them from sickness and disease. Let us pray and ask the Lord to heal our bodies and our souls. He is able to heal the sick and to set us free from the power of darkness.

Luke 13:18-21

When the Lord Jesus described the kingdom of God we might assume he described something positive or uplifting. In both these descriptions of the kingdom the meaning was not positive and it was not uplifting.

The Lord Jesus said the kingdom of God was like a mustard seed which was planted and grew into a huge tree and the fowls of the air came and lodged in the branches. These birds do not represent something good. Instead, the birds in the branches represent evil which infiltrated Israel, the church, and the nations. These birds were not a good sign. Birds were invited to feast upon the dead. Birds were not a good sign in the Bible usually.

In the next illustration he compared the kingdom to three measures of meal that had leaven mixed in. Leaven was a symbol of sin in the Bible. We are admonished to get leaven out of our lives. Leaven is a picture of how sin starts out small but when it is mixed into your life it corrupts you from the inside out. It completely changes who you are.

This second illustration confirms that the birds in the first illustration were not good. Both of these examples of what the kingdom of God was like showed how the kingdom of God on earth is vulnerable to infiltration. The forces of Satan came into Israel, they came into the church, and they will infest the nations. Sin, the devil, self, and the world system corrupt what is good in the kingdom of God on earth.

Why did the Lord Jesus teach us this? So we would not be surprised when we find people full of the devil in church? Don't be surprised to find hypocrites. Don't be surprised to find tares among the wheat. This is how things are right now. This is how it will be until the Lord returns and sends his angels to separate the wheat from the tares. The Lord will remove the leaven one day. The Lord will remove the evil birds roosting in the branches one day.

Meanwhile, we are to occupy until he comes. Continue to preach the gospel. Continue to witness, testify, and lift up the name of Jesus Christ. Don't be discouraged by the leaven and the birds. Make sure you have no leaven or birds in your life. Make sure you are living before God with clean hands and a pure heart.

Let us pray with David, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (**Psalms 139:23-24**)

Luke 13:22-30

Someone asked the Lord Jesus the question would there be few people saved? The Lord Jesus said that many people would try to enter in and would not be able. Then he described the master of the house rising up and closing his door. There were people standing outside the house when he closed the door. Those people now try to gain entrance by saying they knew the master of the house. But he said to them that he did not know them. They were not in his house when the door was closed. This reminds me of Noah and the ark. A lot of people heard the message Noah preached. But how many people were in the ark when the door was closed? Very few indeed. How many people of the original group of Israel who left Egypt actually made it into the promised land? Of all the original group who left Egypt, out of hundreds of thousands of people, only two men made it into the promised land, Joshua and Caleb. What does this tell us?

We should tremble in our shoes. We should take God's word serious and obey what the Lord says. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Jesus Christ is the strait gate. There is no other way to the Father. Jesus is the only way to the Father. To get into God's house you have to enter in by the only door which God has made. That door is Jesus Christ himself.

Notice that the Lord Jesus also pointed out that many people from different parts of the world would be saved. He looked forward to the future when the gospel would be preached to every nation under heaven. God saves people from every nation, tongue, and language.

It doesn't matter if you think you know the Lord. Does the Lord know you? Does the Lord know your name? Is your name written in the Lamb's books of life?

There is only one way to be saved.

Acts 4:12, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

John 14:6, *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

How can I be saved today?

Acts 16:30-31, *"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."*

Romans 10:9-10, 13, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Be saved today!

2 Corinthians 6:2, *"For he saith, I have thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"*

Luke 13:31-35

The Pharisees tried to warn the Lord Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him. We know this is a lie because later on when Herod had a chance to kill the Lord Jesus he did not but sent him back to Pilate. Why did the Pharisees tell Jesus this lie? Perhaps it was the same reason why people tried to intimidate Nehemiah from rebuilding the walls? They thought they could scare Jesus and make him run away?

The Lord Jesus was not afraid. He knew exactly what his purpose was. He went to Jerusalem and he knew he would be turned over to the Romans by the Jewish religious leaders. He knew he would be condemned and executed at Calvary. He prophesied what would happen to himself. He said a prophet could not die outside of Jerusalem. He prophesied what would happen to Jerusalem. It would be left desolate.

The Lord Jesus was not afraid of religious or political leaders. He stood his ground and set himself to walk in obedience to his heavenly Father. Sooner or later the enemy will threaten us and try to turn us aside from obeying the Lord. We must continue to be steadfast and unmovable. We must abound in the work of the Lord because we know our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Notice the Lord Jesus injected the "third day" into his reply. This shows that Jesus knew he would rise from the dead on the third day. He repeated this again when he said "I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following". There is a pattern in the Bible with three days.

God is three in one. Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, church, and the nations. Three days and all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Everything in creation gives glory to God. It reflects who he is. Three days is a reflection of who God is. He is three in one.

Luke Chapter 14

Luke 14:1-6

The Lord Jesus was in the house of a chief Pharisee on a Sabbath day and broke with the tradition of the religious leaders in order to heal a man sick from something called "dropsy". The Lord Jesus challenged the religious leaders and asked them the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" They did not answer him. He pointed out that common sense said if you can take care of your farm animals on the sabbath day then surely you can help a man on the sabbath day. The religious leaders would not answer him.

Here I believe the Lord Jesus was purposely doing good while at the same time he applied pressure to the religious leaders. He healed a man. This should be proof that he was from God and was doing the work of God. He challenged them specifically in regard to their religious traditions. I think the Lord still does this today. When God wants to deliver people he will challenge the religious traditions people have and especially religious traditions that are man-made. I think we would be amazed to know how many religious traditions we have which are man-made and are not from God at all.

We can easily see how many strange religious traditions the Pharisees held. But the Christian church has had 2,000 years to develop and accumulate man-made religious traditions. How do you know which religious traditions are from the Lord and what are simply man-made traditions?

We should pray and ask the Lord to help us let go of any religious traditions which are not of him, from him, or by him. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to set us free from man-made religion so we can truly be used by God to see souls saved, people healed, and lives changed for the glory and honor of God.

The Lord Jesus came into the world to seek and save those who were lost. He died upon the cross of Calvary for our sins. He was buried in a tomb, and three days later he rose from the dead. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him, for he now lives forever to make intercession for us. There is no other mediator between God and man except for Christ Jesus. He is the priest and the mediator. He is the only way to God. Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 14:7-11

The Lord Jesus noticed people took the chief rooms at a feast. They assumed their own importance and wanted to be over other people. This is the pride of life. The Lord Jesus taught the Pharisees that their attitude of taking the chief places for themselves would result in God opposing them. He taught them to humble themselves and take the low place so instead of being embarrassed when they were told to go lower they would instead be happy if they were asked to go up higher. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This is repeated by Peter and also James in their letters. This is a fundamental teaching for Christians and the church. Do not exalt yourself.

When people claim to be "gods" they are exalting themselves. God calls us to humble ourselves. This is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Philippians 2**. The Lord Jesus humbled himself. The Lord Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and said he gave us an example of humility. We are to consider others better than ourselves (**Romans 12:3, 10**)

Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is able to abase those who walk in pride. Pride is the fountain of unbelief and disobedience to God. When we walk in pride we think we know better than the word of God. When we walk in pride then God opposes us. It is God's nature to hate pride and arrogance.

Proverbs 8:13, *"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."*

Instead, humble yourselves before the Lord.

James 4:10, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

Listen to what the Lord Jesus said to these religious leaders. Search your heart and see if there is pride or arrogance in your heart. Ask the Lord to search you and show it to you. Determine that you will confess your sins to the Lord, and repent, and determine to walk with the Lord with a humble heart.

Luke 14:12-24

The Lord Jesus was invited to a meal with the religious leaders. He noticed the people who were invited to this feast were all people who could reciprocate the host. In other words, each person who was there could repay the invitation. This is how the world operates: scratch my back, and I will scratch your back. Give to me and I will give to you. But this is not how the Kingdom of God operates. In God's Kingdom we give and do not expect anything to be given back to us. The Lord Jesus taught them to have a supper and invite people who could not return the favor. He said to invite the poor, maimed, lame, and blind. If you act like this then God will reward you in his kingdom at the resurrection of the just.

What does this teach us? We see here a contrast between the principle of the world system and the kingdom of God. God does not view people by what they can do for him or how they can pay him back.

But how do men see one another? They create friendships with people with whom they think can add value back to themselves. People are viewed as "assets" instead of as people. As long as you serve a purpose these people will be your friend. As soon as they think you can no longer benefit them they drop you as their friend. I have personally experienced this and it is disheartening and discouraging, especially when the person who turns their back on you professes to be a Christian.

My goal is not to base my relationships with people on what they can do for me. Instead, I should have the attitude of someone in God's kingdom. What can I do for others? How can I serve? How can I be a blessing to others? I wish that I had lived like this in the past because it would have made a big difference. How many friends have I lost in the past because I looked at them as "assets" and not as people with intrinsic value to God?

The Lord Jesus went on to tell a parable about a feast which would take place in God's kingdom. Many people were invited but there were some who made excuses for why they could not come to the feast. These excuses were basically made because those who were invited were self-centered and worshiped themselves. They did not care about the person who made the invitation.

God help us to open our heart today and truly care about people. I do not want to make excuses to God as to why I cannot obey him.

Lord, help me to be obedient to you. Help me to love the truth, receive the truth, and to obey the truth when you speak to me today.

Luke 14:25-35

There is a cost in following the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was upfront about how this would look to the world around us. Following the Lord Jesus would at times make the world think you don't love your family. You may find yourself in a situation where you have to choose between the Lord Jesus and your family. In that situation if love for your family stops you from obeying the Lord Jesus then you are really not a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes when we follow the Lord Jesus it may appear to the world that we don't even love our self. It might appear to others we are making decisions that are not in our own best interest. This confuses people in the world who do not know Jesus. They will think

we are foolish when we make decisions that are not in our best interest because we love the Lord Jesus and want to be his disciple.

What happens if you start following the Lord Jesus but turn aside? What if you stop obeying the Lord after years of following him? The Lord Jesus said this is like salt which loses its flavor. Because you followed the Lord it changed you and the world doesn't like you anymore. However, because you stopped obeying the Lord then Christians are not comfortable around you either. What happens? The Lord Jesus said they were like salt which lost its flavor and was no longer good for anything but to be cast out.

Discipleship is serious. We must be prepared to follow the Lord Jesus no matter where that takes us, and no matter what the personal cost to ourselves or to our relationships with other people. We must put the Lord first.

If we truly know the Lord and love him then hopefully the memory of knowing him and loving him will bring us back to active obedience. Sometimes it does. But I've seen the danger in myself and in other people of going along with the world or living for self. I've seen the natural tendency to drift away from following the Lord and it is frightening. May God be faithful to reprove, rebuke, and correct me. And may I have such a love for the truth that I will be like King David and admit, "I have sinned against the Lord". The Lord does forgive and he does restore.

Don't let another moment go by without humbling yourself and crying out to God. Return once again to active obedience in your relationship with the Lord and his word.

Luke Chapter 15

Luke 15:1-10

The Lord Jesus was criticized for spending time with sinners. He spent time with them, taught them about the kingdom, and ate meals with them. The religious leaders condemned the Lord Jesus for spending time with sinners and eating a meal with them.

Looking back on this we can see the religious hypocrisy of the Pharisees but it was not apparent to religious people in that time. There was a lot of history in the Old Testament which taught separation between the righteous and the wicked. Read the book of Nehemiah and you see a man who was so mad that Jews married foreigners that he pulled his hair out. This was the religious background the Pharisees came from. No doubt they put scriptures in the wrong context. But this is what people do. In order for people to justify their unbelief they twist scripture and take it out of context.

The Lord Jesus made it clear that his goal was to reach sinners with the gospel. He was there on purpose to demonstrate the reality of God's love for every person. He gave them simple parables about a shepherd who looked for one lost sheep. He told a story about a woman who searched for a lost coin and found it. These stories demonstrated the joy God has when one sinner repents and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repented.

We should rejoice when sinners come to the saving knowledge of the Lord. We should pray that God will use us to reach people with the gospel. The religious leaders did not know God's heart of love for people. Their entire focus was on rules and keeping people under a religious system. Anyone who disturbed the religious system was condemned. The Lord Jesus certainly upset the religious system. Almost everything he did was a challenge to dead religion and tradition. He constantly challenged the religious ideas the Pharisees held.

God loves us! He reaches out to every person. It is not God's will that any perish. The Lord's desire is for everyone to hear the gospel, repent, and put faith in the Lord Jesus.

God provided forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus. The Lord Jesus died on the cross in our place. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord is saved.

Luke 15:11-32

This is a well known parable of the Lord Jesus. It followed the criticism the Lord Jesus received from the religious leaders who thought that the Lord Jesus was wrong to associate with sinners. The Lord Jesus taught through parables that the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner repents.

This was a longer parable but had the same message and included the reaction of the Jews to the salvation of the lost.

In this parable a father had two sons. The younger sons wanted his inheritance immediately and did not wait. The father gave the son his inheritance and the son left. The younger son wasted his inheritance by living a sinful life. Eventually the young man's sins caught up to him and he was left in poverty. As a result he repented through his suffering and decided to return to his father. The father was on the edge of his seat waiting for his son to return. As soon as the son got close to home the father ran out to meet him and threw a big party to celebrate his return. When the older brother realized there was a party to celebrate his younger brother he was angry. He did not realize why the father was happy about the younger brother's return. He thought his father should love him more because he was faithful to his father and did not waste any inheritance.

This story revealed a lot. The important thing this parable showed was the love of the father. God our Father loves us more than we can possibly comprehend. He loves us so much he sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world to die upon the cross in our place so our sins could be forgiven. God is eager to run to anyone who turns in his direction. The Lord runs out to meet you where you are in life. All you have to do is turn towards him and he will run to meet you. The Lord will clothe you in his righteousness and adopt you into his family. He will rejoice that you come to his house and will celebrate with everyone who is in heaven.

I think we miss this sometimes. We forget that a large part of what the church is here for is the great commission. We are called to be ambassadors for Christ. Our purpose is to preach the gospel and reach people with the good news that God loves them. He loves them so much that the Lord Jesus died on the cross in their place so they can be forgiven and receive eternal life.

Listen to the words of the father. **Verse 32**, *"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."*

Let us rejoice today in what God rejoices in.

Luke Chapter 16

Luke 16:1-12

In one of the Lord's parables a rich man fired his steward. The steward figured out a way he could continue his lifestyle after he lost his job. He cheated his master by having all his master's customers cut their bill in half. What did this accomplish? The steward traded in his master's money and purchased for himself friends. Friends can be more valuable than money or a job at times in life. This man knew all he had left after losing his job was the charity of people. In order to secure their friendship and charity he cut their bill in half of what they owed his master.

Why did the Lord tell this parable? It showed the steward was smart enough to think ahead and secure his future. He used the resources he had and even resources which were not his own but what he had control over in order to secure his future.

The Lord said people in the world were smarter than most of God's children in this respect. Christians do not give any thought about the end of their life. They are short sighted and only think about the current life in the world system. Instead, they should use their time, energy, and resources to prepare for what will come in the kingdom. Paul mentioned this in 1 Timothy 6 when he exhorted people who had worldly resources to invest those resources into what would count in God's kingdom.

1 Timothy 6:17-19, *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."*

We should use everything we have including gifts, talents, or earthly resources and invest into what will truly count when we stand before the Lord. We should think about our reward, inheritance, and crown we hope to receive at the judgment seat of Christ. We need to get our mind off earthly things and set our mind on things above and allow this to impact how we live, how we relate to people, and how we manage our earthly resources.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4.**

Acts 2:21, *"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Luke 16:13-18

The Lord Jesus revealed a spiritual principle which was unchangeable. A man can only serve one master.

He will either serve God or he will serve himself. You cannot love God and money. You cannot love God and the devil. You cannot walk in light and darkness. You cannot be both. You cannot be holy and profane. People who try to do this become double minded and speak with a forked tongue. The devil taught this doctrine of the knowledge of good and evil. Man tried to make himself into a god by

becoming the judge of what is good and evil but the Lord is the true judge. You cannot serve self and God. You either serve God or you serve yourself. If you serve self you turn your soul into a bottomless abyss of darkness.

The religious leaders mocked the Lord Jesus for teaching this because they loved money and thought they loved God, too. However, they were religious hypocrites. They were self deceived. They lied to themselves. This is why they could not believe in the Lord Jesus because they already believed the lie of the devil.

This is crucial! This is fundamental! People think they can have God and their own life, opinions, or self. You cannot. the Lord Jesus plainly said if anyone would come after him they must deny self, take up the cross, and follow him. To live for God means we must die to self. We must surrender our lives to God.

The wonderful thing about God is that he can raise the dead. Once you are completely dead then he gives you a new life which is much better than anything you could have ever imagined.

Let us continue to surrender ourselves to God.

Romans 12:1, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

You cannot serve two masters. You will be mastered by sin or you will be mastered by the Lord Jesus Christ. The only choice we have is which master we will give our life to. One road leads to death. One road leads to eternal life.

Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Luke 16:19-31

Some may think this account of the rich man and Lazarus was a parable but it was much more than a parable. There were no other parables where people had actual names. This was the only story the Lord Jesus told where he gave a person a name. This was not merely a story but a real account of a literal event which the Lord Jesus knew about.

Notice the villain in the story who went to hell was a rich man. This was not an accident. Notice the man who went to paradise was a poor man. This was not an accident. Notice the rich man who made a name for himself on earth did not have a name in hell but the poor man Lazarus had a name that was known not only on earth but also in heaven. Even the rich man in hell knew the name of Lazarus but we still do not know the name of the rich man. Those who make a name for themselves in this earth will be forgotten but those who make the name of the Lord Jesus great will be remembered forever.

Proverbs 10:7, *"The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of wicked shall rot."*

Hell is a literal place of burning flame and torment. There is no water there to drink. A man will be thirsty but he will have no water to drink in that place. He will be tormented in a flame that burns him but will never consume him. He will continue to suffer forever with flames that burn him and with a

thirst which is never quenched. This is just a small glimpse of the horror that is hell. It is eternal and lasts forever and ever.

Repent! Why will you die and go to hell? Even those who are in hell want to send preachers to tell you to repent! The most wicked and vile people in hell pray for God to send preachers and evangelists to warn people on the earth not to come to that place of torment! How awful it must be. How horrifying is a place that even the wicked dead would warn us not to come there.

May God open our eyes to this reality. May the truth so grip our heart we will fall on our knees, humble ourselves, and repent and put all our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus! Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke Chapter 17

Luke 17:1-10

The Lord Jesus taught that sin would come into the world but woe to the person through whom the sin came. Remember Judas participated in the ministry of the Lord Jesus for three years and yet at the crucial moment Satan filled his heart and he betrayed the Lord. The Lord Jesus warned us of the dire consequences of being a stumbling block to other people. He pointed to "these little ones". This could be taken literally as talking about children, and I think it also encompassed those who have little faith, or new faith, as in new Christians. People who have little faith or weak faith could also be included in this, in my opinion, as he also taught about forgiveness.

The Lord Jesus taught that we should always forgive and continue to forgive no matter what. This seemed too much to ask the disciples and they asked him to increase their faith. The Lord Jesus said that what was needed was not a great faith because even someone with small faith could move mountains. What we really need is to love one another. The Lord Jesus gave us the example of love. And this love is our duty. Even after we have loved to the uttermost we have only done our duty.

If we open our hearts to God then the Lord will give us love and we can love people unconditionally. When we love others don't think you are spiritual or greater than others. This love comes from God and is put into our heart by the Holy Ghost. We should only say we have done our duty. We believed in God and in his Word. This was our duty. We only did our duty in believing God's word, obeying God's word, and loving others unconditionally.

Romans 5:5, *"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Luke 17:11-19

I've read this before and thought that the Lord Jesus expressed disappointment with the nine who did not return to give thanks. This time, however, when I read about the ten lepers it struck me that the Lord Jesus used this as a lesson for his disciples. He pointed out to the disciples that the Samaritan had faith and returned to give thanks. This was not the only time the Lord Jesus made a big deal out of a Gentile who showed faith, or love, or thanksgiving. The Lord taught his disciples that the gospel was for the Jew first but it was also for the Gentiles. The church the Lord Jesus built was not only for Israel

but also for whoever would believe. It was not just for the elect in Israel but for whoever would believe.

This reminds me of another scripture in **Revelation 22:17**, "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

I am glad the Lord Jesus died on the cross for all people and not just for a limited group of elect people. The Lord Jesus died so that anyone who would believe the gospel could be saved. Just like Moses lifted up the bronze snake in the desert and everyone who looked were saved so also today anyone who lifts his eyes to Calvary and believes the good news will be saved.

The good news is simple. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried, and he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 16:30-31, "*And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*"

Luke 17:20-25

The religious leaders wanted the Lord Jesus to tell them when the kingdom of God would come. This was a common teaching based on Old Testament scriptures about God's relationship with Israel and the prophecies about the land of Israel, about Jerusalem, and about the people of Israel. These prophecies were also about the Messiah who would bring in the kingdom of God upon the earth. The Lord Jesus never said these prophecies were already fulfilled or would not be fulfilled exactly as they understood the scripture. Instead, he told the religious leaders that the kingdom of God was then presently among them. The King was there with them. He also told his disciples they would long for one of the days of the Son of Man. Those who knew him and knew he was the Messiah would go through a period of waiting before he returned in the fullness of his kingdom. His disciples repeated this question again in the first chapter of the book of Acts. The Lord said God has a plan of his own regarding the kingdom. What no one seemed to understand was this intermission of the church age.

The Lord Jesus said before the fullness of the kingdom arrived that he would be rejected by that generation and would suffer. The scripture prophesied of a suffering Messiah and also of the Messiah who would return in victory to establish his kingdom. The gospels in the New Testament describe the suffering Messiah. The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of the Lord Jesus who will return to bring his kingdom upon earth. We still wait for the day of the Lord's return. Many people in the church today, including myself, believe the Lord's return for his people is not far away. It is near to us. The day of the Lord draws close to us. Are we ready? Are we prepared for the appearance of God's kingdom? The Lord Jesus is coming back.

May the Lord help us to wake up to the day in which we are living. May the Lord fulfill his word and return to his people.

Luke 17:26-32

The Lord Jesus describes "*the days of the Son of man*".

This was a description of the last days before the Lord's return. How did the Lord describe it? He described people living completely for self with no thought to eternity. The world was described as completely self-absorbed like in the days of Noah and Lot. The world was surrendered to self. No one thought of eternity. No one thought of God. Everyone was obsessed with their own lives.

I've heard people say the days of Noah and the days of Lot refer to sexual immorality or it refers to supernatural events in those days but in the context of scripture the interpretation is simple. The days of Noah and the days of Lot meant that people were given to self worship. They were absorbed in their own lives with no thought about God or eternity. This is how the world will be when the Lord Jesus comes back.

The Lord says, "*Remember Lot's wife.*" What does this mean? Lot's wife was not concerned so much with God's wrath upon sin as she was her own life in Sodom and Gomorrah. She looked back to her busy life and preoccupation with self. She wanted to go back to making money, she wanted to go back to enjoying life, she wanted to go back to business as usual. She did not want to think about or believe in the end of the world or God's wrath. She was an example of the carnal person who gave no thought to God or eternity.

This is the world when the Lord Jesus returns. It will be given to its own pleasure, business, and opinions. It thinks of self, business, marriage, and vacations. It is a life lived for self.

How are we living? Do we live only for self? Do we give any thought to the Lord or his return or his kingdom?

Luke 17:33-37

Was the Lord Jesus talking about the rapture? One shall be taken and the other left. He may be teaching about the rapture of the church. He might be pointing to something else. One thing we can learn from this, however, is that there is a time coming when a separation is made.

The Lord separated people into two groups. We already see the two groups throughout the Bible and Jesus taught about two groups. He taught about wise and foolish virgins. He taught about people who were taken and people who were left. He taught about a separation between people.

The Lord Jesus is God's word. He divides those who love the truth and those who do not love the truth.

Hebrews 4:12, "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"

The Lord said he divided people even close relatives and people in families.

Luke 12:51, "*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather **division**.*"

John 7:43, *"So there was a **division** among the people because of him."*

John 10:19, *"There was a **division** therefore again among the Jews for these sayings."*

The Lord Jesus **divides** people. There are sheep. There are goats. There is wheat. There are tares.

A great **division** will come upon the earth in the last days. Those who love the Lord will be separated from those who love self. Those who walk in the truth will be separated from those who walk in lies. Those who walk in the light are taken from those who walk in darkness.

Those who love their life and seek to save their life will lose it. Those who give up their life for the Lord Jesus shall preserve it for eternity.

Luke Chapter 18

Luke 18:1-8

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray and not give up. He told a story about a widow in a city who pestered an ungodly judge to grant her justice. He eventually helped her but not because he feared God or cared about man but because of her persistence. She wore him down. The Lord Jesus said for us to be persistent in prayer. God is not unjust. He will hear our prayers and will answer our prayers. He will take care of what pertains to our life. The Lord Jesus wondered if when the Son of Man came would he find faith on the earth?

I will never forget what a brother in Christ told me. He told me to stay in the word and to stay in prayer. This simple statement stuck with me because of its simplicity, and also because of how profound this really is in the life of a Christian. If we will just continue to read God's word. If we will just continue to seek the Lord in prayer every day. But we are distracted. But we say we don't have time. Or we would rather do other things. The world, the flesh, and the devil conspire to constantly pull us away from this one simple duty: stay in the word, and stay in prayer.

How different my life might have been if I had simply prayed about everything. If I had just waited on God, and prayed, and refused to be moved by things happening in my life, but instead trusted in God for answers. I was so impatient in life. So impatient with people, and jobs, and churches, and pastors, and friends. So impatient. I did not persevere.

The Lord asked us to persevere in prayer. If we continue in prayer and don't give up then it won't be so easy to give up in life either. By staying in prayer we will stay in life, as well.

Don't give up! Men should always pray and not give up.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.
Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 18:9-14

The purpose of the parable was provided for us right at the beginning. The Lord Jesus told us that this parable was for certain people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. This was the warning to us. Do we think we are righteous? Does this attitude lead us to despise other people and make us think we are better than other people? I think this is a real danger.

In the parable the man who humbled himself returned to his house justified before God. God gives grace and mercy and forgiveness to the humble. God gives grace to the humble. However, God always opposes the proud. The self righteous man will be condemned.

We should search our hearts and ask the Lord to show us if we are self righteous and proud. Let us ask the Lord to help us, correct us, and show us how we truly are so we can repent of any pride, or any self righteous attitude.

Do not trust your own evaluation of yourself. Ask the Lord to show you who you are. Ask the Lord to search your heart and life and help you humble yourself under his mighty hand.

The Lord will answer this prayer. He will convict us of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. He will reveal to us our true condition and will show us the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only hope we have is in what Christ Jesus accomplished for us upon Calvary. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day from the tomb.

All our righteousness is filthy rags. But through the work which the Lord Jesus accomplished he provided his own righteousness for us. He covered us with his righteousness. Put your faith today in the Lord Jesus for salvation, for mercy, for the forgiveness of sins. Ask the Lord to wash you and cleanse you in the blood of the Lamb.

Do not exalt yourself. Never list your good works to God or to man as proof of your righteousness. Turn to the Lord in humility, and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Luke 18:15-17

The disciples did not want people to bring their children to the Lord Jesus. However, the Lord had a different attitude about children. He said "of such is the kingdom of God". There was something about children that reminded the Lord Jesus of God's kingdom. What was it? What was it about children that reminded the Lord Jesus about the kingdom of God?

One characteristic might be humility. Most children have a humble attitude. They know they are dependent upon others, their parents, their families. They are ready to receive help and provision from others. They know they are not able to make it on their own. They don't even try. They just simply trust that their needs will be taken care of. They trust in the love of parents and family to provide for them. This is a humble attitude. They know they are not self sufficient.

Another quality of children is innocence. They are not yet tainted by the world. They are not jaded or cynical or suspicious yet. They have not learned hate and distrust. Instead, children will come right up

to strangers. Children have to be warned and taught not to talk to strangers. Why? Because they do not yet know about evil. They are innocent. They simply believe and trust in other people.

This is how it will be in God's kingdom. We will simply rely upon our heavenly Father to provide for us and we will be innocent. We will no longer be afraid of other people. Everyone who lives in God's kingdom will love one another in simplicity.

When you look at small children you get a glimpse of how it will be when we live in God's kingdom. Children are precious to the Lord Jesus.

Luke 18:18-30

A rich man asked the Lord Jesus how to get eternal life. Notice that when the Lord Jesus gave the law to people it was usually because the person did not ask an honest question or they were proud.

In this case the Lord Jesus said something interesting before he gave the man God's law. He asked the man why he called Jesus good? He said that no one was good save God. Did the Lord Jesus deny his deity by this statement? I do not think so. Instead, he was challenging what the man said. Is this man calling Jesus God?

The Lord Jesus quoted the commandments for the man who claimed that he kept all of these commandments from his youth up. The Lord Jesus doesn't contradict him but pointed out that he still loved his money more than God. The Lord Jesus told him to give up his riches and then follow him. The man could not do it. This man would rather hold onto money than inherit eternal life.

The fact this man went away sad proved he was not sincere in his question. This was why the Lord Jesus gave him the law. To confront him with the fact that he was not honest. A person who was truly honest and asked this question would obey what the Lord Jesus said. But the man was not genuine about knowing how to inherit eternal life. This was just a religious question, like a student in a classroom might ask a teacher. He did not really expect the teacher to press him into personal application of the truth.

The Lord presses us today toward obedience. Faith leads us to practical obedience to the Lord. When we are saved we obey the Lord. We hear his voice, receive his word, and walk in obedience. Obedience and bearing fruit is the evidence of a man with a heart that is like the good soil which receives the seed of God's word. The fruit of obedience is the proof we truly desire to inherit eternal life.

Don't ask the Lord a question unless you want to obey what he says. If he speaks and you do not obey you only bring more condemnation on yourself. It is better not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn away from it. I'm so sad for the people I knew who had the truth but turned away. They turned back to the world, like Demas, who loved the world more than he loved the truth.

Money is a big stumbling block for people. There are also other things which stop people from obeying the Lord Jesus. Only you and the Lord know what the hindrance is in your life. Humble yourself today, ask the Lord to help you overcome anything in your life which stops you from obeying him. Obeying the Lord is the most important thing you can do. Nothing else matters. Obey the Lord!

Luke 18:31-34

The Lord Jesus gave his disciples a clear prophecy of what would happen to him. He told them explicitly that they would go to Jerusalem and that everything written by the prophets about him would be fulfilled. He said he would be delivered to the Gentiles, who would mock him, spitefully treat him, scourge him, and then put him to death. On the third day he would rise again from the dead. This was plain language, descriptive, and to the point. **Verse 34** says they understood none of these things.

Why couldn't they understand? The reason was immediately provided in the text: "*this saying was hid from them*".

How many things do we read in the Bible and do not understand? Is it possible the Lord hides things from us in plain view? I think it is possible things can be in plain sight but hidden. This reminds me of the account of how the Lord Jesus walked with two men on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection. The men were disciples of the Lord Jesus and told him about the Lord's death, and the Lord walked right next to them and expounded to them from the scriptures what happened to himself. The Lord taught them that what happened to him was the fulfillment of the scriptures. Yet they did not recognize the Lord Jesus for who he was. Isn't that amazing?

I think we see the same thing happening in the world today. Bible prophecy is fulfilled right before our eyes and most people cannot see it. It is hidden from their eyes. How is this possible?

Because it is spiritual. We can only see and understand spiritual truth by faith. Most people try to understand the Bible with the natural mind but it is only by faith we can understand and see what the Bible says. It is only by the Holy Spirit opening our eyes that we can see and it is only by faith our ears are open to hear his voice.

The Lord Jesus told them that he would die and be resurrected. This was the heart of the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Read **1 Corinthians 15** to see Paul's summary of the gospel and his sermon on resurrection. We need to be reminded of this. Our entire faith as Christians rests upon the supernatural and miraculous work of God in raising his son Jesus Christ from the dead.

This is the living God!

Luke 18:35-43

A blind man was beside the road. When he knew that Jesus passed by he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." The Lord Jesus commanded the man be brought to him despite the people who tried to stop the blind man. The Lord Jesus heard the cry of this blind man beside the road.

Do you think the Lord knew what this man wanted? Of course he knew but he asked the man anyway. "What do you want me to do for you?"

The man told the Lord Jesus that he wanted his sight. What a simple, beautiful request to ask the Lord.

Immediately the man received his sight and followed the Lord Jesus, glorifying God, and all the people who saw this miracle gave praise to God as well.

The Lord heals. Did he ever stop healing people? My question is this: has the Lord forgotten to be compassionate? Does he ignore the cry of people today for healing? If a man cries out today "Son of David, have mercy" will he be ignored? The Lord has not changed. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. He has never changed. He will never change. He says, I am the Lord, I change not.

Luke Chapter 19

Luke 19:1-10

The Lord declared his mission. The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost.

A publican named Zacchaeus was so small he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus saw Zacchaeus and when he spoke to him and invited himself to the publican's house the man instantly repented of his sins. He immediately made a full confession and repented of the life he lived up until that point. This was the amazing thing the Lord Jesus said, "for with God all things are possible."

The Lord made it clear that it was nearly impossible for a rich man to be saved. Yet here we see a rich man who was saved. For with God all things are possible. Never underestimate what God can do with a person's life.

People criticized the Lord Jesus for visiting the house of a sinner. The Lord Jesus, however, said that salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus, because he also was a son of Abraham.

The Lord seeks to save those who are lost. No one is out of God's reach. Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

It doesn't matter what is the background, education, language, or history. It doesn't matter what family a person comes from. It doesn't matter if someone is poor or rich. It doesn't matter if someone is a man or a woman. The gospel is for everyone.

Matthew 22:9, *"Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."*

Matthew 28:19, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"*

Revelation 22:17, *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Luke 19:11-28

This was a parable which taught that when the Lord returned he would call his servants into account. There is a time when the Lord will ask his servants to give account. This truth is repeated by the apostle Paul. He states that we will all stand before the Lord to give an account.

Romans 14:10-12, *"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

The Lord mentioned ten servants in the beginning of the parable but in the parable we only see him dealing in judgment with three of these ten servants. There is a man with a unit of ten, a man with a unit of five, and a man with a unit of one. Each person gave an account. The man with one unit did nothing with what God gave him so when he was judged what he had was taken away and given to the man with ten units. There is a brief protest by someone who says, "Lord, he has ten!" Interesting interruption, as though there were people there who thought that the Lord was unjust. The last people to be judged were killed because they did not want the Lord to be a ruler over them.

We may not understand every detail of this parable but overall we can see clearly the Lord did call his servants to account for their service. As Christians this should make us zealous to live each day with our heart set upon pleasing the Lord and investing in what will count in eternity.

Are we bearing fruit for God? Do our lives bear the fruit of good works which bring glory to God? We will one day give account for our life. Do not waste your life on what will not count for eternity.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 19:29-44

The Lord gave instructions to his disciples on how to get a donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem. The Lord provided transportation but included his disciples in what he did. This was seen when the Lord Jesus fed the multitudes. He included his disciples in the distribution. The Lord did the work but allowed us to participate with him in the work. The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem in this manner was fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The crowds recognized the significance and the religious leaders recognized what it meant. The religious leaders opposed the Lord Jesus. The Lord said to them, *"If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."*

The Lord Jesus mourned for Jerusalem as he entered the city. He prophesied what would happen to them after his death and resurrection. In AD 70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans as the Lord Jesus said would happen.

Bible prophecy was fulfilled in the triumphal entry of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem. The Lord predicted what would happen in AD 70. What Bible prophecy do we see happening today? What Bible prophecies are yet to be fulfilled?

The Lord Jesus will return to earth. He will set foot on the mount of Olives as he did in this account. He will establish himself as king over all the nations of the earth. I am looking forward to this kingdom of God on earth. May the Lord return quickly!

The Lord Jesus gave himself upon Calvary for our sins. He was buried in a tomb, and three days later rose from the dead. He appeared to his disciples and to 500 people at one time. Many of the people who followed Jesus and saw him after his resurrection were willing to die for their faith in him. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ. He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:** And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time"*

Luke 19:45-48

The Lord Jesus went into the temple and cast out all those were selling and buying. He quoted the scripture which stated that his house was a house of prayer but they made it a den of thieves. The Lord Jesus taught people daily at the temple and though the religious leaders wanted to destroy him they could not figure out how to do it. All the people were attentive to hear the Lord Jesus.

Our body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are to offer our bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice for the Lord Jesus. We are not to allow sin to reign in our bodies. Reading through Romans 6 will help us to understand that we have the victory over sin and no longer need to yield ourselves to sin, but instead yield our bodies to God to be an instrument of righteousness.

Also, Paul taught about self-control in **1 Thessalonians 4:4**, *"That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor."*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

Self-control is also listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-24**, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."*

Have we asked the Lord Jesus into our heart? Then he has entered the temple of our body. Do not let him find any sin, but rather let the temple be a house of prayer. Amen.

Luke Chapter 20

Luke 20:1-8

The religious leaders challenged the Lord Jesus and asked him where he received his authority. Where did he get his religious license? Where was his diploma for finishing Bible college?

This was an interesting question and revealed a lot about man's nature. Men naturally assume there is authority given to man from somewhere. Often this authority is given to men through some kind of man-made political, business, or religious structure. If you jump through the right hoops in religious institutions then you receive a piece of paper which says you have the right to preach. The amazing thing about this process is that it really does work. People believe in this process. You are accepted by men if you follow the system.

Is it possible that men who are not even saved can make it through this system and become religious leaders and not know God personally? It is not only possible but it is probable that this happens all the time. What else could explain the condition of modern religious institutions?

The Lord's answer put the question back into the lap of the religious leaders. The authority of these religious leaders for a great part relied upon the support of the people in the crowd. In other words, if the common man stopped believing in the authority of the religious leaders then they would no longer hold power. Most religious leaders only have power as long as they hold onto their prestige. As long as they receive the praise of men they hold onto their positions.

However, the people were convinced that John the Baptist was a prophet. John the Baptist was a martyr for righteousness. The common man believed this. When the Lord Jesus asked the religious leaders where John the Baptist got his authority he put them in a no-win position. If they acknowledged that John was a prophet then they would be challenged as to why they refused to believe in him and be baptized by him. However, if they denied John the Baptist then they would lose the support of the crowd. As a result, they could not answer the Lord's question. And so he said he would not answer their question either.

The Lord could have answered their question. He could have said that God the Father gave him his authority. But instead he turned the tables on them and caused men to consider what authority these phony religious leaders had over them!

We submit to authority but as the Lord Jesus warned we should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. We can respect positions which people hold but do not believe everything men say just because he stands behind a pulpit or has a diploma. Instead, we are to be like the Bereans and search the scriptures daily for ourselves. The Holy Spirit is here to lead and guide us into all truth.

Obey, respect, and love your leaders. Pray for them. But be wary of them as well. The best of men are only men at best.

Luke 20:9-18

The Lord Jesus told a parable to the religious leaders about a certain man who planted a vineyard. The man planted the vineyard and then leased it to some people who were supposed to take care of it for him. The owner of the vineyard eventually sent someone to collect the fruit from the vineyard from those he left to take care of it. However, the people he left in charge were not interested in giving the fruit to the owner. Instead, they beat and threw out anyone the owner of the vineyard sent to collect fruit. Eventually the owner sent his own son to collect fruit but those who managed the vineyard killed the son so they could steal his inheritance.

The Lord Jesus asked the religious leaders a question: "*What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*"

The answer: he shall come and destroy the husbandmen and give the vineyard to others.

Then the Lord Jesus quoted a prophecy from the Bible to make his point that this parable applied to the situation at hand: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner"

The religious leaders persecuted and killed all of God's prophets who were sent to them. Israel rejected their Messiah. As a result, God's judgment fell upon the people of Israel and they were scattered all over the world for 2,000 years.

The only reason why we see Israel back in the land today is because God will fulfill his word and the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth again. This time he will come to save the nation of Israel from the worst holocaust in history. The time of Jacob's trouble is right around the corner but the Lord Jesus himself will save them out of it. All Israel will be saved, according to the scripture.

The stone which they rejected became the cornerstone. The Lord Jesus is the cornerstone. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken, but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Luke 20:19-26

The religious leaders planned to kill the Lord Jesus after he told a parable against them. They sent spies to trap him in his words so they could have something to accuse him and hand him over to the Roman government to be put to death.

One of these questions had to do with paying taxes. The spies knew the people hated to pay taxes to Caesar so they wanted to get the crowd to turn on the Lord Jesus or if the Lord Jesus said don't pay taxes then they could turn the Romans against Jesus. Either way they thought they could trap the Lord Jesus.

However, the Lord Jesus turned the entire trap upside down on them. He asked for a coin, and then asked them whose image was on the coin. They said the image on the coin was Caesar. The Lord Jesus said to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. But give to God what belongs to God. What did he mean by this?

In Genesis it is written that man is made in the image of God. If man therefore has the image of God upon him then he must belong to God. The Lord Jesus by telling them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's made a contrast between a worthless coin with the image of a man on it and the infinite value of a man who is made in the image of God.

He exposed to everyone that the people who asked him this question put their value in worthless money, but that those who truly love God gave him their whole lives. The Lord Jesus answered their question and rebuked them at the same time. To say they were shocked and confounded by the reply of the Lord Jesus would be an understatement. This question, meant to trap the Lord Jesus, only made the Lord Jesus more godly and righteous. Every trap they set only trapped themselves.

One practical application of this is that Christians should pay taxes to whatever government they are under. The Lord Jesus did not teach rebellion against authority. We should never take part in any kind of rebellion against government if there is any way possible. There may be extreme circumstances where Christians may be called to resist government, but those cases are rare in history. See also **Romans 13**.

Luke 20:27-38

The Sadducees asked the Lord Jesus a question concerning marriage and the resurrection. They posed a hypothetical question to him about a wife whose husband died and so his brother was supposed to marry her. But all the seven brothers died. Now who would she be married to in the resurrection? The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.

The Lord Jesus revealed some interesting truth in response to this question. He said people in this world given in marriage. But in the world that will be in the future people will not be married but are like angels. They do not die anymore so there is no reason to be married in that world which is to come. Then the Lord Jesus proved there is life after death by quoting the scripture that said that the Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living for all are alive to him.

The Lord Jesus firmly stated there is life after death. There is resurrection. There will be life after this present one. How should we then live? Are we to live only for this present life? Should we not be thinking ahead and investing in the world which is to come?

The Lord taught us to seek first the kingdom of God. The Lord taught us to lay up our treasures in heaven. Where our treasures are there will be our heart also. How do we do this?

One way to do this is to live each day expecting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should keep in mind the fact that we will give an account to the Lord for our life here on earth. We should look for ways to invest our time and energy into what will truly count for eternity.

What will count in eternity? God's word endures forever. Also, the souls of men and women. How are we reaching others with the gospel? Are we praying for people? Are we living a life which is salt and light?

There will be a resurrection. The Bible makes it clear. Death is not the end. It is appointed unto man to die once and then afterwards to face judgment and account with our creator.

The only hope anyone will have then is to be saved now. We are saved by putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Christ died for our sins. He was buried and rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Today is the day of salvation.

Luke 20:39-47

The religious leaders finally had no more questions to ask the Lord Jesus. The Lord asked them a question about the Messiah as the son of David. How could David call his own son "Lord"? How can a father call his son "Lord"? The only explanation, which the religious would not believe, was that the son of David would also be the Son of God. He was the Son of man and he was the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is the God-Man. Fully God. Fully man. No one could reply to the question which Jesus asked.

The Lord Jesus told his disciples and the public to beware of the religious leaders. He said they desire to walk in long robes, love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts. They had the highest positions in the business world, the religious world, and in society. The only area they did not control was government which was controlled by the Romans.

The Lord Jesus said the leaders of business, religion, and society devoured widow's houses. How did they do this? I don't know the details but in some way they oppressed the poor. They took from the poor and gave to the rich. Has the world changed any since then? No, it is the same today as it was then.

The Lord Jesus said the leaders will receive "greater" damnation. So there are degrees of punishment in hell? The higher your position in this world the greater your punishment will be in hell. The more influence and power a man has in this world the greater the chance he will suffer more in hellfire. With greater power comes greater responsibility and accountability.

We will give an account to God one day. Make sure you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior before you leave this planet. Don't die without receiving the gift of eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke Chapter 21

Luke 21:1-4

The Lord Jesus observed people putting their gifts into the treasury for the temple. A lot of rich people put in donations but a poor widow put in two mites. The Lord Jesus told everyone that she put in more than everyone because she donated her entire living but the rich only gave only a little out of their abundance.

The Lord observed what people put in the offering plate. He saw the attitude and heart behind what they gave in the offering plate. This reminds me of the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts. They lost their lives because they gave to the church with deceit in their heart. They tried to lie to the Holy Spirit. You cannot lie to God.

This reminds me of what Jesus said about not letting your left hand know what your right hand gives. We should not give in front of people to receive praise from men. If we do then we have received our reward. God will not reward people who give only to be seen by men. We should not look for the praise of men but the praise of God.

The Lord Jesus praised this widow. She put in everything she had. But those who had so much gave very little. This is a perfect picture of human nature in action. The rich do little to help others. But it is the poor who give their last dollar to help someone else. I've seen this in action in my life. The humble poor person will give everything they have to help others out of love. But the rich will do as little as they can get away with and justify their hard hearts with excuses.

The Lord sees it all. He knows who gives and who does not give. He knows why people give and why they do not give. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. **2 Corinthians 9:7**, *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*

Luke 21:5-19

Some tried to draw the Lord's attention to the temple but he told them the time would come when there would not be one stone left upon another and that all the stones of the temple would be thrown down. They asked the Lord Jesus when these things would happen and what sign would there be that these things should come to pass.

The first sign the Lord Jesus warned about was deception. He said we should be on our guard and not be deceived. Many would come in the name of Christ proclaiming the end of the world. The Lord Jesus said do not follow these people. He said there would be wars and commotions but don't be terrified. These things must happen but the end was not yet. He said nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There would be earthquakes in different places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs from heaven. Before that they would be persecuted.

What is the purpose of persecution? The Lord said persecution would turn out to be a testimony for Christians. The Lord taught us to settle in our heart not to meditate what we would answer but trust God to give us wisdom at that time which our enemy would not be able to resist.

The Lord Jesus predicted family members would betray one another and cause some to be put to death. Christians would be hated by all men because they belong to Christ and proclaim the name of Jesus Christ.

The word the Lord Jesus gave us for these end times was patience. In your patience possess your souls. We are to be patient, endure, and walk one day at a time by faith in the Lord Jesus.

This sermon regarding the end time continues in the following verses but we will pause for now here at **verse 19** with the Lord's command for us: *"In your patience possess ye your souls."*

James 1:2-4, *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

Romans 5:3-5, *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

James 5:7-8, *"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."*

2 Thessalonians 3:5, *"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."*

Luke 21:20-28

The Lord Jesus described an attack upon Jerusalem which would result in the destruction of the city. This happened in AD 70. It will happen again during the great tribulation when the Antichrist enters the temple and declares himself to be a god. The Lord Jesus warned that the Jewish people in Jerusalem should flee when they see armies coming. He called these times the days of vengeance. The Lord Jesus described what would happen before it happened so that when it took place we would know that God is in control of everything.

He said that Jerusalem would be trodden down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled. There will come a specific time in historical future when the rule of Gentile nations will come to an end. This will happen at the end of the tribulation when the Lord Jesus will return and set up his kingdom upon this earth. This was also described by the prophet Daniel when he said a stone made without hands would destroy the image of the earthly kingdoms and establish a kingdom that would endure forever.

We know what the Lord Jesus was describing here not only applies to AD 70 and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem but also the last days events when he went on to describe signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. He described distress of nations and perplexity. Men's hearts would fail them for fear because of the things coming upon the earth and that the powers of heaven would be shaken.

He said men would literally see Jesus Christ return in a cloud with power and great glory. The Lord Jesus prophesied his own second return to planet earth.

In **verse 28** he said, *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."*

We should lift up our heads right now. There are multiplied signs taking place in our present day. We should be earnestly looking for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will return for his people soon. Lift up your eyes as the sun rises; the Lord returns for his people.

Luke 21:29-38

The Lord Jesus told them a parable about a fig tree. Many people interpret this fig tree as the nation of Israel. When Israel became a nation again in 1948 the fig tree shot forth and so we can know summer is near at hand. When we see this we know the kingdom of God is near. Then the Lord Jesus said, *"Verily*

I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." Many take this to mean that the generation living during the time when Israel became a nation again in 1948 will not pass away until the Lord Jesus returns. If this interpretation is correct then we are right on the threshold of the rapture of the church, the tribulation, and the arrival of God's kingdom on this earth.

The Lord Jesus warned that in the days before the appearance of the kingdom of God we would need to watch and pray always. He seemed to make a distinction here between believers who watched and prayed and those who do not. Those who watch and pray would be counted worthy to escape something that would come upon the entire world. What else could this be but the tribulation period described in the book of Revelation? We can conclude that in order to escape the tribulation we must be saved, and not only saved, but living for the Lord Jesus by watching and praying. Part of watching and praying means to avoid surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of life. If we are surfeiting, drunk or consumed with this life then this "snare" will come upon us unawares. Instead, we should pray and watch so we can be counted worthy to escape what will come upon the earth.

This particular interpretation seems to imply a partial rapture of believers, but actually I don't believe in a partial rapture. I believe if you are truly a born again believer in Jesus then you watch and pray. But there are a lot of religious people in church today who profess they know God but who live just like the world. These people will be left behind, because they don't really have a relationship with the Lord Jesus, because they don't really have a relationship with the Lord Jesus. They are just church goers. Those people who convince themselves they are right with God because they believe a Bible doctrine but don't really have an active, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and shine the light on any delusion or deception in your life. Don't wait until it is too late and then discover you lied to yourself the whole time.

This message is not necessarily for people in the world because there is no doubt they will be left behind. This message is for people within the household of faith especially for those walking in the flesh and not obeying God's word. They are deceived. God wants to wake them up to their true condition so they do not perish along with the rest of the world. I would say they are really not Christians, but just religious church goers. However, they do have enough truth and light that they will know what happened whereas the world won't have a clue.

Does the Lord know you? Does he know your name? How do you know the Lord knows who you are today?

Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Luke Chapter 22

Luke 22:1-6

Sooner or later people will show their true colors. Judas was one of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and yet he was not a true believer. He was part of the church, part of ministry, and the whole time faked it. Time will reveal the true nature of a man. For the true man of God time makes his

light shine brighter. But the man who was a phony time will reveal the darkness in his soul. This was the case for Judas Iscariot. The end game of his life was betraying the Son of God and killing himself.

What is in my heart today? Do I love the Lord Jesus more today than I did yesterday? Will I continue to follow the Lord Jesus even if he goes to Jerusalem and dies on a cross? Will I continue to follow the Lord Jesus even when I do not understand what he is doing? What if he leads me into the valley of the shadow of death? Will I continue to trust in him? Or will I get angry? Will I get mad and give place to the devil? The Bible says here: "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve." How is this possible?

Judas gave place to the devil. The disciples did not understand what the Lord Jesus planned when he went back to Jerusalem. They did not understand what he meant when he said he would be handed over to the Gentiles and crucified and rise from the dead. If the disciples did not understand this what kept them following the Lord Jesus? Why did they keep following the Lord Jesus? Even though they did not understand they trusted the Lord Jesus. They could not grasp his purpose but they trusted him. They knew he was the Son of God. But Judas was different. For some reason Judas did not trust the Lord Jesus. There was something about the Lord Jesus that was beyond his reach. He could not understand the Lord Jesus and he did not trust him. He was easy prey for Satan.

Satan entered Judas and then Judas went straight to the enemies of the Lord Jesus. Judas "communed" with the chief priests and the captains how he might betray the Lord Jesus. The enemies of the Lord Jesus were glad and agreed to give him money.

May God help us! Do you think you love the Lord? Do you think you are too spiritual to ever do what Judas did here?

1 Corinthians 10:12, *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."*

Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. Pray and watch yourself. Continue to walk with the Lord. Examine yourself and make sure you are in the faith. Remember to abide in the gospel. Hold fast the form of sound words.

Luke 22:7-13

The Lord Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare an upper room for the Lord and his disciples to celebrate the Passover. I've often wondered why the instructions the Lord Jesus gave to Peter and John seem mysterious. It almost reads like something from a spy novel. "When you enter the city there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him to the house he enters." These are the kind of instructions which spies receive in war time. Then I realized when I read this that the nature of these instructions was mysterious on purpose. The Lord knew Judas looked for an opportunity to betray him. He needed to organize this last supper with his disciples in a way Judas did not know beforehand where they would be so that this last supper would not be interrupted.

I remember reading some of the testimonies of Christians living in persecuted countries that they had to resort to this kind of activity in order to avoid detection from the government when they held their church services and meetings.

The disciples went and found everything as the Lord Jesus instructed them. They prepared the upper room and made everything ready for the Passover celebration for the Lord Jesus and his disciples.

Notice how the Lord involved his disciples in his work and his ministry. The Lord knows everything and is able to do all things, yet he allows us to be part of the work of the ministry. He allows us an opportunity to serve and be a part of his plans and his purpose.

The big picture here is that the Lord has a kingdom. He looks for disciples who will work with him in that kingdom. Do you want to be a part of that kingdom work? A day will come when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth and establishes his kingdom over all the nations. Only those who followed the Lord in this life will have an opportunity to serve him in that kingdom.

How do we get ready? Believe the gospel today. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Now that you are saved love the Lord with all of your heart. Invest your life in what will truly count for eternity. Stay in God's word and stay in prayer. Obey the Lord and his commandments. Become an overcomer in Christ Jesus by abiding in the gospel and overcoming self, sin, the world, and the devil. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 22:14-23

The Lord sat down with the twelve apostles for his last supper with them. This was the Jewish Passover meal but during this meal it became something else. It was the inauguration of the Christian communion tradition. Here we see the Lord took bread and a cup and shared it with his disciples. He said the bread represented his body which was given for us. He said to eat the bread in remembrance of him. He did the same with the cup. He said the cup was the new testament in his blood which was shed for us. The Lord Jesus gave his body and his blood for us.

He followed this with a startling announcement about a traitor among the twelve apostles. Each one of the disciples inquired among themselves which of them it was that would do this thing. No one realized that Judas was the traitor at that moment.

As it was the last supper so it is today. We still have people in the church who really do not know the Lord like Judas. They take the bread and the cup of communion and yet do not know the Lord Jesus Christ personally. They have never put their personal faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

The apostle Paul reminded us of communion in **1 Corinthians 11:23-28**. Interesting, Paul also associated the last supper with the betrayal of Judas as well. *"That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread..."*

This reminds me of **Psalms 23:5**, *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."*

Our Christian lives are not lived in a safe space. We live our Christian life in the midst of our enemies every day. The Lord Jesus showed this in the last supper. In the most intimate moment he shared between himself and his disciples there was a devil sitting at the table with him.

Don't be afraid of the enemy. The enemy was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. He looked into the eyes of his enemy and he overcame him. Because the Lord Jesus overcame we also who abide in him have overcome as well. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Luke 22:24-30

During the Lord's last supper the disciples had an argument over who they thought was the greatest among the disciples. This was an ongoing conversation throughout the ministry of the Lord Jesus and was a topic he confronted them on more than once.

Again, the Lord repeated his teaching that the greatest among them would be like a child and the chief among them would be the one who served. The Lord Jesus taught them this by his own example of being there to serve them. In John's gospel we see that he humbled himself and washed their feet at this last supper. The Lord Jesus gave us the example of what was great in God's kingdom. Humility and being a servant qualified one for greatness in the kingdom of God.

The Lord never rebuked people for wanting to be great but he helped us understand greatness from God's point of view was opposite from our human point of view. The world system is opposite from the kingdom of God.

The Lord Jesus made the contrast between the world system they understood. He taught them that what the world considered great is opposite of what God considered great.

The fact this was an issue with the disciples even up until the last moments of the Lord's earthly ministry should give pause. Let us consider if this is not a huge deal in the life of the believer. We are so brain washed by the world system we live in. We never give it a thought that perhaps our covetous attitude toward position and prestige is completely against God's kingdom. We seek to make a name for ourselves and exalt ourselves over other people. And yet, all the while the Lord looks at us across the table and patiently repeats his teaching again and again. If you want to be great then humble yourself and be a servant. Do not exalt yourself over brothers and sisters in Christ. Do not seek to make a name for yourself. Instead, let your goal be to make the name of the Lord Jesus Christ great and glorious.

2 Chronicles 29:13, *"Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name."*

Psalms 66:2, *"Sing forth the honor of his name: make his praise glorious."*

Psalms 72:19, *"And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."*

Let us make the name of the Lord great and glorious. He is only one who is worthy to be called "The Greatest".

Luke 22:31-38

The Lord Jesus warned Peter he would deny him three times. The Lord knew Satan wanted to sift Peter as wheat was sifted. However, the Lord Jesus told Peter he prayed for him that his faith would not fail but when he recovered would strengthen his brothers. This happened exactly as the Lord Jesus said it would happen. The Lord's prayers were answered for Peter. We have the letters of First and Second

Peter as a testimony of the Lord's answered prayers for Peter. He did strengthen his brothers. He did recover his faith and he never forgot the word the Lord told him.

Later, Peter would warn other Christians about this enemy, Satan, or the devil.

1 Peter 5:8, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."*

Peter learned not to put confidence in himself but instead to be sober minded and vigilant. Watch unto prayer. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. We cannot defeat the enemy in our own strength but in the power of the Lord Jesus we can resist the devil and he will flee from us. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Notice Peter's first reaction to the Lord's warning was to deny what the Lord Jesus said. This should be a first indication as to what would shortly follow. If you dismiss God's word don't be surprised if you betray or deny him later on. We need to listen to what God's word says to us. We need to be sober and vigilant. We need to take heed to what God's word says to us right now. Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think but instead think soberly. Do not underestimate your flesh or the power of darkness to deceive you and cause you to do things you never imagined you would do.

We need to always call upon the name of the Lord and put on the full armor of God and prepare to endure the hour of darkness. It will not last forever. Can we endure? Can we stay alert and pray during the hour of darkness?

Temptation will come. May God help us to stay awake and alert and put no confidence in ourselves or in our own flesh. Instead may the Lord help us to humble ourselves and to think soberly and to not think of ourselves more highly than we should. Let us think soberly and be vigilant and watch unto prayer.

Luke 22:39-46

The Lord Jesus knew everything happening behind the scenes with Judas. He went to the mount of Olives where he knew Judas would also know where he went. The Lord Jesus exhorted his disciples to pray that they enter not into temptation. Then he himself went into deep, agonizing prayer. The Lord Jesus prayed so hard he sweat as it were drops of blood. An angel appeared and strengthened the Lord Jesus. We are given a glimpse into the words the Lord Jesus prayed here as well: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

What a mystery! The Son of God praying for the will of his Father to be done. Yet he is himself God in the flesh. Amazing grace! This is a mystery we will never fully comprehend until we see the Lord Jesus face to face. The Lord Jesus prayed through and walked in victory.

However, the Lord's disciples did not pray like he did. Instead, they slept from sorrow. The Lord Jesus asked them why they slept. He exhorted them to rise and pray so that they would not enter temptation.

Temptation will come into our life. This is a guarantee. However, the Lord taught us through these scriptures that we can overcome temptation if we pray. We can pray and the Lord will give us victory

over the flesh, over sin, over temptation, over the world system, and over the devil. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. No temptation has taken us except what is common to man. God is faithful. He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able but will with the temptation provide a way to escape.

Our escape is to pray and call upon the name of the Lord. Pray that you enter not into temptation but that you may be delivered from evil. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray this. He is teaching us to pray this. Do not be arrogant and think you can overcome sin, or your flesh, or the world, or the devil in your determination or will power. We will fail every time. But if we will pray and humble ourselves God will give us grace to say "no" to temptation. Say "yes" to the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit will say "no" to temptation for you. Yield yourself to the Lord through prayer. Call upon the name of the Lord.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous run to it and are safe. Are you running to the name of the Lord? Are you calling upon the name of the Lord?

Luke 22:46, *"Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."*

Rise and pray, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Luke 22:47-53

Judas led the enemies of the Lord to his location on the mount of Olives. When he approached he kissed the Lord, which was a signal to those he led that he was the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus asked him if he betrayed him with a kiss. One of the disciples wanted to fight back with his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. However, the Lord Jesus stopped him, and then healed the man who lost his ear. The Lord Jesus asked them why they came to arrest him in the night with swords and staves as if he were a thief. He was with them daily in the temple teaching the word. Then the Lord said something that sticks out to me: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Evil does have a day. It is clear from scripture the Lord allowed the devil to do his best and gave him a short period of time to do his evil work. However, this time frame was only an hour. It is a short period of time. It is only for a season. It will not last forever. The power of darkness will not always be allowed.

Weeping may remain for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Ephesians 6:13, *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."*

The Lord allowed the enemy one hour. It was a short period of time. We are to endure through the hour of darkness. We are to endure our hour of isolation, our night of confusion, and drink our cup of pain. It will not last forever. Be patient. The coming of the Lord draws near.

Be patient. Endure. God is still on the throne. God is still in control.

Luke 22:54-62

Just as the Lord Jesus told him would happen Peter denied the Lord three times before the rooster crowed.

The Lord Jesus always knew exactly what would happen in their lives. When the Lord speaks to us we should listen and take to heart what he says. If we ignore his word or dismiss his word to us then we are in danger of denying him just like Peter. To dismiss the Lord's word is to dismiss him because you cannot separate the Lord from his word. He is his word and the two cannot be separated. Don't let anyone tell you they have the Lord Jesus but reject the Bible. The Lord and his word are one.

Peter followed afar off. This phrase was symbolic of what happened in Peter's heart as well. Peter could not comprehend the events which unfolded in front of him. He could not turn his back on the Lord right away. Peter was brave and willing to fight but he could not wrap his mind around the Lord giving up and giving in to the enemy like this. He followed from afar.

This situation is repeated in the life of every serious Christian. There will absolutely come a time in your life when you will face confusion. You will not understand what God is doing in your life. Everything will feel like in your life that it is upside down. You will feel like you want to pull out your sword and start slashing but the Lord will tell you to put up the sword and quit fighting.

It reminds me of the scripture in **Ephesians 6:13**, *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"*

This is a similar picture to what Moses told Israel at the Red Sea. The enemy was closing in on them and all they could do is stand still between the Red Sea and certain death.

We begin to see here what Paul talked about in **2 Corinthians 1:9-10**, *"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us"*

Why did Peter deny the Lord? Do you think he was afraid? No, he wasn't afraid. He was ready to cut a man's ear off. Why did he deny the Lord?

He denied the Lord because he no longer understood what the Lord Jesus was doing. Peter thought he had everything figured out, but he didn't. The Lord Jesus did something unexpected (though it should not have been because the Lord Jesus told them what would happen to him). Peter did not understand what the Lord Jesus was doing.

In this moment of confusion he denied the Lord. He denied he knew the Lord because in that moment he really did not know the Lord anymore. He no longer knew the Lord Jesus in that moment. He was overcome by his night of confusion and his hour of isolation.

This is why the Lord Jesus tells us to pray and watch. The time will come when nothing makes sense. Evil, sin, the power of darkness, and the devil will have a chance to attack you. When it comes it will make no sense. Evil and sin never make sense. You cannot understand darkness. It is impenetrable. You cannot understand it.

It is then you must have simple, childlike trust in the Lord Jesus. It is in that hour you must simply say, like Job, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"*. Tell your heart and soul this: *"The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord"*.

This confusion will not last forever. The night cannot last forever. The morning will come again. Lift up your eyes as the sun rises. The Lord returns for his people.

Luke 22:63-71

The Lord told his disciples that he would be handed over to the Gentiles and that they would mock him and mistreat him before crucifying him on the cross. This is what we see happening here in these verses. They blindfolded him and struck him in the face and blasphemed. They mocked him and treated him with contempt and blasphemy. This all happened even before his trial.

At his trial the religious leaders asked him if he was the Christ. Take note that the religious leaders were accusing him of being their Messiah. When they found him guilty of making this claim they rejected him. They convicted him of claiming to be the Messiah and completely rejected his claim. The tragedy here was that he was who he said. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ.

What do they say? "What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." What did they hear? They heard him say that he was Christ.

Is the Lord Jesus the Christ? His resurrection proved that he was who he said he was. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day. He is the Lord, and he is the Christ. He is the Son of God, and he is God the Son. He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke Chapter 23

Luke 23:1-12

What does everyone in the world have in common? They all hate the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pilate and Herod were enemies until the Lord Jesus Christ came into the picture. Then after both were exposed to the Lord Jesus they found they had something in common. Both hated the Lord Jesus Christ and had contempt for the King of the Jews.

The religious leaders brought the Lord Jesus to Pilate. Some saw Pilate's words as reflecting a moral man who did not want to condemn an innocent man and tried to avoid condemning the Lord Jesus. I don't think Pilate was that way at all. I think Pilate hated the Jews and Pilate perceived that the Jews tried to manipulate him. I think his refusal to condemn the Lord Jesus was not because he was moral or had a conscience. I think he merely tried to spite the religious leaders. However, he knew when the game was up and eventually gave into the religious leaders after Herod sent the Lord Jesus back to him.

Notice that the Lord Jesus, though he was not sentenced for any crime, suffered terribly. He was beaten, mocked, ridiculed, and was not even officially charged with any crime. This was more than just mere human evil at work. The spiritual powers of darkness energized these people and added fuel to the fire of men's natural evil.

Pilate asked the Lord Jesus if he was the King of the Jews. The Lord Jesus replied to Pilate, but did not give a reply to Herod. I don't think the Lord replied to Pilate because there was hope of Pilate's salvation. I think he replied so that his testimony would be on record. He acknowledged the charge against him from the religious leaders was that he was the King of the Jews and the charge of him being the Christ. This was what the religious leaders charged him with. This was the charge Pilate posted on the cross. This is why they killed him. They killed him because of who he was. He was the Son of God. They killed him because he was the Son of God.

This demonstrated the default hatred in the heart of men against God. Men were not only apathetic toward God. They instinctively hated God and wanted to rid God from the world. They will fail in their hatred. God is King forever. The Lord reigns forever and ever. His kingdom has no end.

Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. **Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 14:11-12**

Luke 23:13-25

Pilate stated to the religious leaders that he did not find anything in the Lord Jesus worthy of death. His plan was to chastise the Lord Jesus and let him go. He was able to let him go because of a tradition of releasing a prisoner on this certain day. Instead, the crowd and religious leaders wanted Barabbas released. Barabbas was a murderer. Eventually because of the insistence of the crowd and the religious leaders Pilate gave in to their request to condemn the Lord Jesus. He released him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they desired, and delivered the Lord Jesus Christ to the will of the religious leaders and crowd.

The Lord Jesus took the place of Barabbas. This symbolized how the Lord Jesus took the place of every sinner who ever lived on this earth. The Lord Jesus gave his life upon Calvary for the salvation of sinners. Justice demanded a penalty be paid for sin. The Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sins in his own blood upon the cross of Calvary. In this way God was just and was also the justifier of those who put their faith in Jesus. The Lord imputed his own righteousness to us when we repent and believe the gospel. This message is so clear and simple that even a child can understand this. Jesus died for us. He was buried in a tomb, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. **(1 Corinthians 15:1-4)**

The Lord gave his life. A prisoner exchange took place that day. The Lord gave us his life. We must surrender our life to him now. We give up any right we have to our own life, and commit ourselves completely into the hands of God. God loves us so much. We can trust in him with our lives. We can trust in him to accomplish his will, and purpose, and plan in and through our lives.

2 Timothy 1:12, *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."*

Philippians 1:6, *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."*

Trust in the Lord today. Cast all of your cares upon him, because he cares for you. He will provide for you, and protect you, and be your portion forever.

Luke 23:26-31

They found a man named Simon, a Cyrenian, to bear the Lord's cross for him. A great crowd followed the Lord Jesus who cried and mourned. The Lord Jesus told them not to cry or mourn for him but to mourn for themselves because of what would come upon them. He spoke of a time in the future when men would ask for the mountains to fall on them and for the hills to cover them. Jesus said if men did these things when the tree was green what would they do when it was dry. This is an interesting question.

My take on this statement about a green tree and a dry tree is that the world then was not yet as sinful and dark as it would become. In those days the world was still fresh and had some life in it. But the closer we get to the end the more the world is dead. We are living in a world that is dry. Jesus described dry places as the haunt of evil spirits. This is what we see happening at the end of all things. The world is no longer fresh and green. It is dry and withered. It is a time when the powers of darkness openly control government, business, and society.

Not much was said about Simon who carried the Lord's cross. However, it reminded me of how often the Lord invited people to take up the cross, and to deny themselves, and to follow him. This was a picture of following Jesus on the road of humility, obedience, worship of God, and denying one's own self and name.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Luke 23:32-43

The Lord was led to Calvary with two other men. These two men were criminals and were crucified one on his left and one on his right. One of the criminals challenged him that if he were truly the Christ to save himself and them as well. However, the other criminal spoke of a fear of God and that he knew he was a sinner. He asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. The Lord Jesus promised him that he would be with him that day in paradise. Notice this criminal did not have to do anything but ask for the Lord Jesus to have mercy on him and remember him. He acknowledged that he was a sinner, believed in the Lord Jesus, and asked the Lord to remember him. Salvation is very straight forward. Admit you are a sinner. Believe in the Lord Jesus. Call upon his name. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

The Lord Jesus prayed for the people who put him on the cross. He asked the Father to forgive them because they did not know what they were doing. Later the apostle Paul stated this in his letters as well. He said if they knew who he was they would not have crucified him. But they did not know. Therefore the Lord Jesus prayed for them that God would have mercy on them and forgive them. At least some of those people were saved, including the criminal who asked Jesus to remember him.

He was mocked by the religious leaders when he was on the cross. They mocked him in the same way as the criminal. They said if he was the Christ then he should save himself and come down from the cross.

The soldiers mocked him and said if he was the king of the Jews that he should save himself.

Do you see a pattern here? The world always talks about saving one's own self. This is the philosophy, religion, and default belief system of everyone in the world system. Save yourself. This is the basis of all of the false religions in the world. Save yourself.

However, the Lord Jesus did not come into this world to save himself. He came into this world to save us. And he did this by staying on the cross and dying for our sins. He was our substitute. He is our atonement. He took our sins upon himself and paid the penalty for the sake of God's justice. Therefore God can be just and he can also justify those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today and you can receive complete forgiveness for your sins. All of your sin can be washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Luke 23:44-49

Unbelievers gave glory to God at the death of the Lord Jesus. God confirmed this was his son through signs which people saw at the death of Jesus. At the sixth hour darkness was over all the earth until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent. The Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit", and then he died. The Roman centurion who stood by proclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

People knew. People know today. People know when the Lord Jesus died on the cross that the whole world changed. Even to this day people either love the Lord Jesus or they hate him. There is no middle ground with the Lord. This demonstrates the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the most important event in all of human history.

This will determine your eternal destiny. If you humble your heart and believe the gospel you can be saved. You can receive eternal life and go to heaven when you die. However, if you reject the gospel and the message of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection then you will spend eternity separated from your creator. What does it mean to be separated from the giver of life, and light, and love, and all that is good? What does it mean?

You get one glimpse of that eternity here at Calvary. Darkness. A darkness that covered everything. That will be part of a your eternity separated from God. Do you want to exist in darkness?

Turn to Jesus now. Repent of your sins, confess your sins to God, and put your faith in what the Lord Jesus accomplished upon the cross that day. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus and his work of saving your soul through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 3:15, *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

John 11:26, [Jesus said] *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"*

Luke 23:50-56

Joseph of Arimathea requested from Pilate the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrapped the Lord's body in linen and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of stone. No one was ever buried in this tomb before Jesus. The women who followed the Lord went to the tomb to see where the Lord was laid so they could return with spices and ointments to anoint the Lord's body.

This scene is part of the gospel message we preach. The Lord Jesus died for our sins, and he was buried. Here we see the literal fulfillment of prophecy that said he would make his grave with the rich in his death.

The grave would not hold him for long. He would rise from the dead on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:55**, *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

God the Father placed those who believe into Christ and united us together with him in death and in burial. This was why when we were baptized in water we were fully submerged underneath the water. We were buried together with the Lord Jesus.

Romans 6:3-5, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"*

We died with Christ. We were buried together with him. We were raised together with the Lord. We ascended with him and are now seated together with him in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:5-6, *"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*

We were buried with Christ. What does this mean? It means that this world no longer has any right or power over us anymore. Stop living like you belong to this world. You belong to the Lord Jesus now. You are united together with the Lord forever. Your citizenship is no longer in this world but in the kingdom of God. Learn to live according to the truth which God's word declared about you.

Luke Chapter 24

Luke 24:1-12

The women who were mentioned in the previous chapter and who followed Joseph to the tomb returned again to the tomb on the morning of the first day of the week. This was Sunday morning. Their plan was to anoint the Lord's body with their spices. However, they did not find the Lord's body.

Instead, they found the stone rolled away and met two men in shining garments. They asked a question: *"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"* We have the proclamation of the good news. The Lord Jesus was risen from the dead. These two men reminded the women of what the Lord Jesus told them.

The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

They remembered his words! The Lord brought back to their memory everything he said to them. The women returned to the disciples and told them what they saw and heard.

Incredibly, the disciples did not believe the testimony of the women. But something motivated Peter to run back to the tomb. He found the situation as the women described it. He wondered what happened.

The empty tomb was irrefutable proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day. This is the heart of our faith. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**"*

Romans 10:9-13, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"*

2 Timothy 2:8, *"Remember that **Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:**"*

The Lord Jesus rose from the dead. He is seated at the right hand of God and is making intercession for us. He will return again in power and glory and rule over all the nations of the earth.

Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Call on his name today! Today is the day of salvation.

Luke 24:13-35

Two sad disciples of the Lord walked to Emmaus when the Lord Jesus came up and walked with them. What a wonderful picture this was of how tenderhearted the Lord was to care about them. He comforted those who were cast down and discouraged. How did he help them? He pointed them to the Bible and exhorted them to believe everything the Bible said about himself. Study the scriptures. In the Bible you find a sign pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now believe the witness and the testimony of the law and the prophets and come to the Lord Jesus. These men believed the word the Lord Jesus spoke to them. When they sat down to eat the Lord Jesus broke bread and blessed it and then their eyes were opened and they knew who he was.

As we study scripture the Lord reveals himself to us. As we eat the bread of life and as we break bread and eat then we see. We receive revelation of who the Lord truly is. We can see! The Lord is risen indeed.

The disciples ran back to Jerusalem and told the other disciples that the Lord Jesus was risen indeed. They began to recount to the other disciples how the Lord revealed himself in the breaking of bread.

The Lord Jesus encourages us to read, study, and meditate upon scripture in order to understand who he is. The greatest resource you have available to you is the Holy Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and study to show yourself approved unto God.

I notice in this passage how the Lord Jesus acted as if he would keep walking. He waited to be invited in. The Lord waits for us to invite him into our heart, into our life, into our home, and into our family. The Lord waits for us to invite him into our life. How do we do this? We can start by calling upon the name of the Lord. We can start by believing his word in the Holy Bible.

Remember the Lord is risen. He is alive. He walks with us. He knows what we think, how we feel, and is filled with compassion and has a tender heart toward us. We can talk to the Lord about anything, ask him any question, and cast all of our cares upon him. He cares for us.

Luke 24:36-53

The Lord Jesus appeared in the midst of his disciples. They were afraid of him at first and thought he was a ghost. But he convinced them it was truly himself and that he was not a ghost. He asked for something to eat and ate a piece of fish and honeycomb in front of them.

He opened their understanding of the scripture and showed them everything in the Bible which pointed to his death, burial, and resurrection.

Then he told them what would happen next. He told them to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father and they would be filled with power from on high. This was described in more detail in **Acts chapter 1**.

Then the Lord Jesus led them out as far as Bethany and he was parted from them and went up into heaven. They worshiped the Lord and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

God's word shall be fulfilled. Everything written in the Holy Bible will be fulfilled exactly as it is written. The Lord Jesus will return again to planet earth. He will return and establish his kingdom over all the nations. This is what we are looking forward to. The Lord will return soon. Let's continue to lift up our head because our redemption is drawing near.

The Gospel of John

John Chapter 1

John 1:1-5

It would be a good idea to compare these opening verses with the first chapter of **Genesis**. Also, compare this with the first chapter of **First John** as well.

It is clear from these Bible verses that Jesus Christ is God. To deny the deity of Jesus Christ is to deny the Holy Bible, the gospel, and the only way a man can be saved. Jesus Christ is God. The clear witness and testimony from the Holy Bible is that Jesus Christ is God.

He is also a man. He came into this world as a light to men but men did not comprehend the Lord. Even his own disciples had a difficult time understanding what he said, why he did what he did, or his purpose in being here in the first place.

The Lord Jesus is referred to as the Word. The Word of God is a person. It is not an abstract idea. The word is not just a positive confession. The word is a person. Never forget that God's Word is a person. A person has context. A person has a mind, and feelings, and a goal. You cannot make the Word of God conform to your own ideas or desires. You must conform yourself to the Word of God. The Word of God will not conform himself to you.

What do we have as a description here of the Word of God? He existed before time, before the beginning. In the beginning he already existed. He existed with God. And he was God. This is a clear proclamation of the trinity of God. God is Father, and God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. In the first few verses of John's gospel we already have a clear presentation that God is more than one divine Person. This is the true God. To deny that God is a trinity is to deny the Holy Bible, the gospel, and the only way a man can be saved. If Jesus is God, and the Father is God, then already we have a problem if God is not more than one Person.

How do people get around this? Men try to pull God into time and space and say God evolved from being the Father, into the Son, and now is the Holy Spirit. But this is blasphemy. God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God does not evolve. God is not a man. He does not change. This idea of modalism is an offshoot from the theory of evolution. People who deny the facts in the Bible usually always resort to some form of evolution in their ideas. This goes back to the lie of the devil in the garden when he told Eve she would evolve and become a god. To imply God is evolving from Father, to Son, and now is the Holy Spirit is to bring God down to the level of man.

God has always been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God will always be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Go back and read the first few verses of this gospel of John again. Do we believe what the plain text says or not? If you do, then you must believe in the trinity. You must believe that Jesus Christ is God, and that he always lived with God the Father in eternity past, present, and future.

The Lord Jesus was also involved in creation. This entire material universe was created by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal life. If you do not have the Son of God you do not have life. The Lord Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other God but him. He is the true God and eternal life.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4.**

John 1:6-13

The person named John that is mentioned here in these verses is John the Baptist, and not the man named John who was actually writing this gospel account. John the Baptist was a prophet who preached in the wilderness a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. People went out to John to hear him preach and he made the road straight for the appearance of the Messiah. John the Baptist was a witness to the light of God who is Jesus Christ. Notice that the apostle John here described the Lord Jesus as the Word of God. Now he also called the Lord Jesus the "Light". John the Baptist pointed to Christ and was a witness so that people would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord came into the world, and even though the world was made by the Lord Jesus, the world did not recognize him. They did not know him. The Lord Jesus came to his own people, the nation of Israel, but for the most part none of them recognized him or acknowledged him.

Then in verse 12 we have a powerful promise. This is a verse that is worth memorizing and hiding in your heart. **Verse 12,** *"But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."*

This shows us how simple the gospel message is. Everyone who believes, receives, and calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus is saved. He gives those who receive him and believe on his name the right and power to become the sons of God. We become sons of God through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of Jesus.

There is power in the name of Jesus. There is power to leave behind your old life of sin. You can be set free from sin, self, the world, and the devil. No matter what your past is you can have a new life today. Your sins can be washed away, and your past can be put under the blood of Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of Jesus today.

The Lord is good. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Let go of your old life and allow the Lord to make you into a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed. Behold, all things become new.

John 1:14-18

God The Word became a man. He was born of a virgin mother, Mary. God entered the world as man. He who made all things came into the world he made but the world he made did not recognize him or accept him. God in the flesh lived among us. He walked on the surface of this planet as a man. He made his home in a tiny country in the Middle East called Israel. He grew up in a village called Nazareth. He had a real family, a real work place, a real church he attended. He walked among us. He loved people and they loved him.

The apostle John describes him as being "*full of grace and truth*". Think about that for a minute. He was a man who could completely speak the truth in perfect love. He could rebuke you and you would be convinced that you were the most special loved person on the planet. Correction with complete love. Grace and truth. Love and discipline. These are the qualities which make the best parents, the best employers, the best Pastors, the best leaders. If you find a leader who can love people and correct them at the same time then you found a rare thing in today's world.

John the Baptist witnessed to others about the Lord Jesus. He said that the Lord Jesus came after him but was before him. What does this mean? It means that John the Baptist recognized that Jesus Christ was God who walked as a man. He existed in eternity past, but appeared in time after John the Baptist. He always was, always will be. He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. How did John the Baptist know this? He knew it by revelation from the heavenly Father. God revealed to John the Baptist who the Lord Jesus was and is. Even before John the Baptist was born he knew who the Lord Jesus was.

Notice a contrast is made between the law of Moses and then grace and truth in Jesus Christ. The law came by Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. This is showing us that in the day of church we live a different fashion than Israel did in the Old Testament. We do not live under the law of Moses which was given to the nation of Israel. We live under the grace and truth which is in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul further expounds on this doctrine in his letters, showing us the difference between serving God under the law and serving God under grace. The book of Romans goes in-depth on this subject.

No one can know who God is except through the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus revealed God the Father to us in completeness. The Lord Jesus is the express image of God in a man. He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Colossians 2:9, "*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*"

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 1:19-28

Here we have the testimony of John the Baptist to the religious leaders. Actually, the religious leaders did not even come out to see John the Baptist but instead sent messengers to ask John the Baptist who he thought he was. Isn't that just like proud men with a lot of prestige and position? They would not go out themselves but they would send spies to get information. They wouldn't go out to the river! They might get wet!

John the Baptist told them plainly who he was. He was not the Christ, or the Prophet, or Elijah. Instead, he was a voice crying in the wilderness who warned people to get ready for the Messiah. John told them plainly there was a man who stood among them who John believed that he was not worthy to untie his shoes. John told them the Messiah was already there, but they did not know who he talked about. They would never accept the testimony of John the Baptist or the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had their own agenda. To these religious leaders John the Baptist was probably just a trouble maker. He was someone stirring up the crowds. But John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the

prophecy in Isaiah. He came as a voice in the wilderness to make a straight path for the Lord to walk on.

The world, especially the religious world, will challenge you on anything you try to do for God. If God calls you to do something then expect that worldly religious people, especially those in position with prestige, will come down on you. They will not go along with a messenger sent by God. They will oppose it. However, worldly religious people cannot stop a true move of God in their midst. They could not stop John the Baptist. They could not stop Jesus. They could not stop the apostles in the book of Acts. They cannot stop the Lord Jesus from returning again and establishing his kingdom upon this earth.

The Lord will return again. He returns to set up his kingdom on this earth. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

John 1:29-39

John the Baptist testified that when the Lord Jesus was baptized in water that the Holy Spirit came upon him as a dove from heaven. John said that the one who called him into ministry told him that the one upon whom the Holy Spirit would descend and abide was the Messiah. John said that he saw this happen to the Lord Jesus Christ and he proclaimed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Once John knew who Jesus was he began to point people to the Lord Jesus. He said, "*Behold the Lamb of God*", and pointed his disciples to Jesus. At this point his disciples left him and began to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two of John's disciples followed Jesus and asked him where stayed. The Lord invited them to come and see where he lived. This was the beginning of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus.

We have the witness and testimony of John the Baptist, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. This same account is mentioned in other gospels as well and includes the testimony of God the Father from heaven proclaiming that Jesus is his Son.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is God the Son, and he is the Son of God. Jesus is fully God, and he is fully man. He is the God Man.

John 1:40-51

The Lord Jesus called men to follow him. We see mentioned here Andrew, Simon who was renamed Cephas (Peter), Philip, and Nathanael. Two interesting conversations took place here. One conversation was with Simon who he renamed Cephas. Cephas means Peter, which means rock.

Another conversation was with Nathanael. When Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus, the Lord Jesus proclaimed, "*...an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile...*" Nathanael asked Jesus how he knew him, and Jesus said he saw him sitting under the fig tree before Philip called him. What does this mean?

It means that God has foreknowledge of our lives. He sees us, and he knows those who will come to him and be his disciple. The Lord knew me long before I ever knew him. He saw me when I was a small child, when I was a young man, when I grew up. He saw me and designed every step of my life.

Before a word is on my tongue, lo, he knows it altogether. The Lord has hemmed me in behind and before, and has laid his hand upon me.

The part where Jesus mentioned angels ascending and descending hearkened back to the account of Jacob when he had a vision of angels ascending and descending. Jesus said Nathanael was a true man of "Israel" in whom there was no guile. Before Jacob became Israel he was a man of guile, but after his confrontation with the Lord and wrestling with the angel he became Israel. The Lord removed all the guile out of his heart.

The Lord removes all the vain imaginations, the guile, and the deceit from our lives. The longer you walk with the Lord the more you will become simple, and straight forward, and sincere, and honest. In other words, the Lord will make you child-like in your attitude. The Lord makes us humble and sincere, like himself.

Notice that Nathanael immediately recognized who Jesus really was. How did he do this? He did this because he had an honest and a good heart. If we will approach the Holy Bible with honesty and humility then we also will come away exclaiming, "The Lord, he is God! He is the king of Israel!" He is also the king of my heart. Amen.

John Chapter 2

John 2:1-11

The people who knew what the Lord Jesus did were his mother, his disciples, and the servants. This beginning of miracles the Lord Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and his disciples believed in him. This miracle of turning water into wine showed the Lord's glory. It demonstrated his power as the creator. The Lord is the creator of the universe. Nothing is too difficult for the Lord.

The purpose of the miracle was not only to provide wine for the governor of the feast. It also demonstrated to the Lord's disciples who he truly was. The Lord revealed himself to his disciples and the servants through this miracle. Only a few people noticed the miracle which took place in front of everyone at the feast. The people who knew were humble people, or people who already followed the Lord Jesus.

This showed something about the nature of God and the nature of man. I often wonder why it was lowly shepherds who received such a revelation of the birth of Christ. Why did Paul say in his letter that God chose people who were humble or base?

This revealed something about the nature of God. He hid himself from the proud and arrogant but he revealed himself to those who were of a contrite and lowly heart.

Isaiah 57:15, *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

God gives grace to the humble, but he opposes those who are proud. Who are the proud? The proud are those who are strong in the world system, those who rise in power, prestige, and position in the world system. You cannot attain position in the world without cultivating the pride of life.

The only example I can find in the Bible which contradicts this general rule is Daniel. God elevated Daniel to a high position in government. However, Daniel was the exception and not the rule. Also, Daniel never lost his ability to bow his knees and pray three times a day in humility to God. He was definitely one of a kind in the human race.

The Lord Jesus turned the water into wine. Did this teach us that it is OK to drink alcohol? There are a lot of scriptures in the Bible which people can use to justify drinking alcohol. I think if someone did use scripture like this to justify drinking alcohol they would be in spiritual trouble. They were only hurting themselves and are also a stumbling block to other people.

John 2:12-25

The Lord Jesus went to Jerusalem with his disciples and family. He cleansed the temple of money changers and proclaimed "*Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.*" This was an exhortation we should remember. Don't mix business with religion. This is something we can easily fall into. How many churches have become mini-corporations? It is sad to see the church which becomes a religious business.

The Lord Jesus was confronted for his actions at the temple. His reply to them was a challenge for them to tear down the temple and he would raise it in three days. This was a prophecy that the religious leaders would hand the Lord Jesus over to be crucified, but after three days he would rise from the dead. It was only after Jesus was resurrected that the disciples understood what Jesus said.

Many people believed in the Lord Jesus when they saw the miracles he did, but the scripture says the Lord Jesus did not commit himself to any of them. He knew all men and did not need for anyone to testify for him. He knew how unreliable men could be. This can be seen later in the contrast between his triumphal entry and the quick turn around the crowd made when they asked Pilate for Jesus to be crucified.

Several lessons can be taken from this. Be careful about your involvement with the church. Make sure your motives are not for self or business interests. If you go to church to make business contacts or build your business then you should consider the anger which the Lord Jesus showed toward people who brought business into his house.

Another idea to remember is that we cannot put our trust in men. The Lord Jesus did not put his trust in men. He put his trust in his heavenly father. As the Psalmist wrote we should not put our trust in princes. The best of men are at their best only men.

Put your trust in the Lord today. He is your provider, your protector, and your portion forever.

John Chapter 3

John 3:1-8

This was a conversation between the Lord Jesus and a Pharisee. The Pharisee Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews but somehow his heart was open to believe in the Lord Jesus. He came to the Lord at night probably out of fear of man. He began by calling the Lord Jesus "Rabbi" and said that he believed he was from God because of the miracles he did.

The Lord did not reply to what Nicodemus said but instead spoke directly to the need in the heart of this religious leader. He told him that he must be born again.

I believe the phrase "born again" was the correct translation because I believe the mention of water in these verses points to natural birth. A man was born once by a woman. He was born again by the Holy Spirit. One was a natural birth, one was a supernatural birth. The reason I believe "born again" was correct was because that was the way in which Nicodemus understood Jesus. He asked if a man could return to his mother's womb to be born again?

The Lord Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to natural wind. We cannot control the wind. Neither can man control the Holy Spirit. Those who were born again were no longer ruled by natural religion anymore. Instead, they were controlled and led by the Holy Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is completely different than following natural religion. It is very difficult for religious people to understand and experience the life of the Spirit. It is not impossible. I believe Nicodemus eventually understood the Lord and probably was born again at some point. The words which the Lord planted in his heart during this meeting no doubt took root and brought forth spiritual fruit in this man's life.

You must be born again. This is the gospel proclamation. We cannot get more clear than what the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus. Unless you are born again you will never see the kingdom of God. Do you want to go to heaven when you die? Do you want to see God's kingdom? You must be born again.

How am I born again? Humble yourself, repent, and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He bore our sins upon himself at Calvary. He took our place. God forgives our sins for the sake of his son Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be born again by the Holy Spirit today.

John 3:9-15

The Lord Jesus used the example of Moses who lifted up a snake in the wilderness to illustrate for Nicodemus what would happen to himself. In the same manner that when people looked up at the snake in the wilderness it saved them from death, so also when people look to the Lord Jesus upon Calvary their souls are saved. We are saved from eternal death by putting our faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

The Lord exhorted Nicodemus and appealed to the fact that he should know better. Nicodemus had a position as being a master of Israel. This meant he was in a position to teach spiritual truth to others, and yet he did not understand basic truth of how a man can be saved from eternal death!

It is scary to think how many religious leaders there are in the Christian church who can teach on prosperity and how to live a good life but do not even understand the basic doctrine of how a man is born again. Unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jesus said that he spoke with Nicodemus about earthly things and he did not believe. How then could he speak about heavenly things? We must be able to grasp the fundamentals of salvation before we can move on to other doctrines. We must understand that everything begins when a man is born again by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit there is no hope of truly understanding the word of God or imparting spiritual life to other people. We must first have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus before we can teach others about God. We must live truth before we can impart truth to others. Otherwise, we are spreading the letter of the law which will put burdens on people.

Have you ever heard someone preach from the Bible and walked away feeling more heavy, more depressed, more discouraged? It is a good chance the man did not walk in the truth he tried to preach. In order to give something to another we must first have it ourselves. To give spiritual life to people we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must be born again.

John 3:16-21

Here is a famous verse in the Bible. People who know nothing about the Bible have probably heard this verse. **John 3:16**. It is an important verse in the Bible. It contains a concise summary of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God loves us so much he gave his only begotten Son! Why? So that whoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Perish? Yes, perish. As in hellfire and eternal separation from God. God loves us so much that he does not want to see one person die and go to hell. It is not God's will for anyone to perish but for every single person to repent, believe the gospel, and be saved. The Lord Jesus loves us so much he died on the cross in our place. I wonder if we really meditate on this enough. Do we let this sink in? Do we grab hold of the depth of God's love demonstrated for us upon the cross of Calvary? I doubt we can understand how much God loves us. But we can understand **John 3:16** and we can choose today to believe in Jesus. This is so simple even a child can understand this and believe and be saved. It is not complicated.

Those who reject God's message of love by complaining that they do not understand the Bible are lying. It is not hard to understand **John 3:16**. If you will take this one verse, and believe in it, and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you can understand the other truths in God's word. But it begins here. Accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Those who reject this free offer of salvation do so because they love their sin. They will not come into the light of God's word because they love the darkness. They think the darkness covers their sins. But the darkness does not hide from God. The Lord can see you even in the darkest night. He knows where you live. One day you will give an account to him for your life. Even the words you have spoken will be brought into account.

Humble yourself. Turn to Jesus. Receive God's love and forgiveness as outlined in the gospel. Read **John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and Romans 10:9-14**. The Lord can save you today if you are willing.

John 3:22-30

Here we see people tried to cause division between John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the work of the devil. The devil always tries to sow division by comparing one man to another man. When you see people do this remember the message of the apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 1:10-17**. For some reason the enemy likes to make the issue of baptism a dividing doctrine. But what was the response of John the Baptist when people tried to make a comparison between him and Jesus? John said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

The response from a Spirit filled man is always to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. We should always humble ourselves when the enemy tries to create division. Never defend yourself. Humble yourself. Trust in God. **Philippians 2:3**, *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* **Romans 12:3**, *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

By humbling ourselves we defeat the lies of the devil. When the enemy tries to bring strife then the solution is humility. Humble yourselves. Do not allow the enemy to set one man against another.

The Lord is near. Walk in the fear of the Lord. Do not compare yourselves with other people and do not compete against others. Take the humble place and live for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is your rewarder.

John 3:31-36

These verses continue the testimony of John the Baptist about the Lord Jesus Christ. John said that Jesus came from above and was above all.

John recognized that men are of the earth. We speak from the viewpoint of the earth. However, the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven and was above all of them.

What the Lord Jesus saw and heard he preached. Men did not accept the testimony of the Lord because they were from the earth and the Lord was from heaven. Men were self worshipers and only thought of self. They could not think in terms of God's kingdom. Men rejected the testimony of Jesus because they were sinners and lived in darkness.

God sent Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus spoke the word of God. Anyone who believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ has agreed with God. When we believe God's word we affirm the truth. If we do not believe in God's word we call God a liar.

Anyone who believes in God's Son Jesus Christ has eternal life. Anyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ does not have life but God's wrath abides on him. The wrath of God abides on anyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other scriptures which build on this truth: **Ephesians 2:1-3**, "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*" **1 John 5:10-12**, "*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*"

John Chapter 4

John 4:1-4

The Lord Jesus did not baptize people. Paul said the Lord did not send him to baptize people but rather preach the gospel. There was definitely something about baptism that seemed to indicate when you allowed a man to baptize you then you had joined his club or submitted to the name of a man. It seemed to breed strife, or envy, or vain glory under certain circumstances. I'm not against water baptism by any means. However, there does seem to be a danger in this religious ordinance. It was a danger that men thought they brought other men underneath their own name or control.

When the Lord became aware that the Pharisees noticed that the Lord's disciples baptized more than John then the Lord Jesus left the area. He wanted no part in men who sowed seeds of competition, strife, comparison, or vain glory. We should be very sensitive to this. Don't allow yourself to be put in a situation where you are set in contrast or competition with another brother, another church, another ministry. Always take the road of humility and walk away from competition, contrasting, or comparing. Don't let people compare you to someone else. Don't compare yourself with others. This is the road to self-worship, and it is the basis of the world system.

Instead of building numbers the Lord left everything and headed to Samaria where he had an appointment with one person. The Lord left the 99 and went to find the one lost sheep that he needed to save.

May God give us this same attitude to leave vain glory and have the heart of a true shepherd who seeks those who are lost.

John 4:5-9

The Lord Jesus went out of his way to visit the city of Samaria, which was an unusual place for a Jewish rabbi to visit. The woman he encountered at Jacob's well thought it was strange. However, the Lord Jesus knew exactly what he was doing and why he was here. This woman needed the living water of eternal life and the Lord met her to offer her this living water.

He began the conversation by asking her for a drink of water. Her first response was a rebuke toward him. She asked him why he asked for her help. He was a Jew and she was a Samaritan, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

This conversation revealed deep divisions have always existed in history. Men always suffered from division among different classes of people, whether those barriers were ethnic, religious, racial, or language. Men always naturally suspected others who were not like themselves.

However, the Lord Jesus crossed all these barriers. I'd like to suggest that any crossing over bridges between men is on account of this one man from Galilee. He is the great bridge over which men cross and meet one another. I know there are Arabs and Jews who love one another because they both love the Lord Jesus Christ. There are people of every nation and language who love one another because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord unites all mankind. It is only in Christ Jesus that all divisions and barriers are removed. It is only in the Lord that men find common ground for agreement.

These verses were the beginning of this conversation, but I want to take a little bit of time just to comment on this picture of the Lord reaching across barriers. He was the great shepherd who went looking for the lost sheep. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Colossians 3:10-11, *"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."*

John 4:10-14

The Lord Jesus made this offer to every person who would take the time to listen to him. Anyone who would listen to the Lord Jesus can receive this exact same offer of living water. This living water represents the Holy Spirit and eternal life. If the Holy Spirit comes and lives in your heart then you are made alive, born again, and have life that lasts forever.

This woman interpreted what the Lord Jesus said in natural terms. However, the Lord Jesus was speaking spiritual truth. How can the Lord speak to us about eternity in a way in which we can comprehend? He used word pictures like "water", and "light", and "fruit". These were simple words that even a child could grasp. But what the Lord talked about went beyond the natural world that we can see, and hear, and feel, and touch. It is an eternal world which is beyond human comprehension. God offered us a chance to be with him in eternity. He loved us so much that he was willing to humble himself and become a man. He was a man who sat down next to this well and spoke to this woman. He did this, not only for her sake, but for everyone in her village, and also everyone who would read the testimony of this conversation.

If we drink of this world we will always be thirsty. If all we ever drink is the water that is of this world system then we will always be thirsty. This world system we live in cannot satisfy the spiritual thirst that is in our heart. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can truly satisfy our spiritual thirst. Every person born into this world thirsts after this living water, but it is only when we believe in the Lord Jesus that we can experience the living water which satisfies.

The Lord Jesus is living water. He offers himself to satisfy our spiritual thirst. If any man will drink this living water he will never thirst again. He will no longer need the empty waters of this world.

John 4:15-18

These scriptures demonstrate that the Lord Jesus knew everything about her life. He had complete knowledge of this woman's life. He knew this woman would be here. The scripture said that he had to go to this meeting. This was a divine appointment that the Lord knew about before he got there. He knew this woman's history and her life.

He knows the same thing about each one of us. He knows the life we have lived. This woman had lived a life of sin, and yet the Lord is reaching out to her in mercy and grace.

This shows us the heart of God. The Lord came to seek and to save those who were lost. The Lord went looking for lost sinners. Paul the apostle said that he was the chief of sinners, but God saved him in order to demonstrate the greatness of his mercy and grace toward sinners.

I was street witnessing one time and met a young man who had been in a war. He had killed people during that war, and as we talked he said he did not believe God could forgive him for killing another human being. However, I showed him the life of Paul in the Bible. I helped him to understand that God can forgive. There are men in the Bible who killed people, and yet God forgave them and even used them in the ministry. Moses is one example. David is another. And the apostle Paul is another example.

It does not matter what we have done in our past. The Lord knows all about it. If the Lord is speaking to you today it is because he loves you and he wants to wash away all of your past sins. He talked to this woman, in spite of her history and past, because he wanted to bring her to the saving knowledge of the Messiah. He revealed himself to this woman as the Messiah. He brought her to the saving knowledge of himself.

The Lord sends us out to share with others the good news. The Lord Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him. He lives forever interceding for us. He has made a way for us to be reconciled back to God. You may have peace with God today through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 4:19-24

After the Lord confronted this woman over her sinful lifestyle she changed the subject to religion. She acknowledged that he was a prophet. How else could he know all about her life? She started with what she understood of religion, which was a limited theology of mixed up ideas. The Lord began to correct her on what she said.

First of all, he removed the worship of God from any specific geographical location. In the Old Testament, under the law of Moses, the worship of God was always in a very specific location. It was at the tabernacle, and later it was at the temple where the ark of the covenant was located. Worship was always tied down to the temple and Jerusalem.

However, we see that the Lord introduced a completely different way of relating to God and worshipping God. We know from the letters of Paul that the temple of God is no longer a building made with hands, but each individual believer is the true temple of God. Our body is the temple of the Holy

Spirit. Jesus said that the Father looks for those who will worship in spirit and in truth. God is a Spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We could expound more on this phrase "spirit and truth", but let us summarize by saying that we worship God through the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God. The truth is in God's Word. The Holy Spirit fills the heart of every believer. If we have one and not the other then we will get out of balance. We must have the Holy Spirit. We must have the Word of God. We need the Spirit and we need the Truth to worship God correctly. This is one of the fundamental ways the enemy tries to mess up churches. He will get them to emphasize one or the other and not both at the same time. Jesus said we must worship in spirit and in truth.

God is not tied down to one geographical location. We should not try to put God in a box and think we can only worship God in a church building on Sunday morning. We can worship God any time and any where. I believe the Lord wants us to worship him every day of the week and in everything we do, and every where we go. Never leave the Lord behind, but take him with you everywhere you go.

Another important point to remember from this passage is this: salvation is of the Jews. God gave us the scriptures through Israel and the Jewish people. The Lord Jesus Christ himself in his humanity is a Jewish man.

Do not ever allow the enemy to put hatred in your heart toward the Jew. Don't ever believe that God is finished with Israel and the Jew. God still has a plan for Israel. God loves the Jewish people. They are his chosen people, even today, even if they are still in unbelief, God still loves them.

Do not let your heart develop an apathy or indifference toward Israel or the Jewish people. We are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and the salvation of Israel.

Don't allow the attitude of the world to get into your theology or thinking and become indifferent, apathetic, or worst case, anti-Semitic. Don't let that into your mind or your heart. Anti-Semitic attitudes are from the devil.

May the Lord help us to always bless Israel, to support the Jewish people, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

John 4:25-26

This is one of the few places where the Lord Jesus specifically revealed himself as the Messiah to a person. This woman knew he was a prophet, but she did not realize he was the Messiah. She knew the hope for which Israel and the Samaritans waited. They waited for the Messiah. Their idea of the Messiah was probably of a military leader who would deliver them from the Romans. Eventually the Lord will return as a conquering king. But at that time in history he came as a humble man to be the Savior of the world. She said she knew the Messiah would come into the world. Jesus told her that he was himself the Messiah she looked for.

I can't imagine the spiritual shock this woman must have experienced. It is evident she believed what he said to her because of her reaction. What joy she must have felt! What wonder and amazement must have arisen in her heart! Somehow, this woman who had no husband found the one man that everyone

in the nation waited for. Here was the Messiah. Why did he come to her of all people? Why did he reveal himself to this humble woman who came to get water at this well?

Why was he born in a stable and laid in a manger? Why did the angels only appear to the lowly shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night? Why did he grow up in a village that had no reputation? What does this tell us about the nature and character of God?

The apostle Paul touched upon this in **1 Corinthians 1:27-29**, *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."*

The Lord chose lowly fisherman and a tax collector to be his twelve apostles. He chose to witness to a humble woman at a well. The Lord came into the world to seek and to save those who are lost.

Do you feel lost today? Do you feel your need for salvation? Do you know that you need God's help today?

The Lord Jesus invites us to come to him and find rest. He is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion forever.

As David said in **Psalms 23:1**, *"the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"*.

Call upon the name of the Lord. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 4:27-38

When the Lord's disciples returned the Samaritan woman forgot her water pot and went back into the village to bring everyone out to meet the Lord Jesus. This was an automatic response to meeting the Lord Jesus. Men try to make evangelism a program in the church. However, when we truly encounter the Lord Jesus Christ we become instant evangelists. I've experienced this in my life. When I truly encountered the Lord Jesus Christ I had no problem telling people. My problem was knowing when to keep my mouth shut at times. Evangelism is the natural outpouring of a heart that is filled with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The disciples were confused when they saw Jesus talking to this woman. They did not understand why he would cross over these barriers to talk to this woman, but they had enough sense not to reproach the Lord or try to correct him. He knew they were confused, and he taught them about the harvest that was before them. Here we see the beginnings of the Lord Jesus teaching his apostles that this harvest does not only include Jews but also Gentiles. The Lord purposely reached out to people outside of the nation of Israel. Several times he pointed out to his disciples the great faith that people had who were not Jewish or in the nation of Israel. Why did he do this? He pointed forward to the arrival of a new season in God's plan for man. This new season would include, not only Israel, but everyone who would hear the gospel and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Messiah of Israel was not just the Messiah for Israel, but he was the Messiah of all nations. He is the Savior, not only for the elect of God, but the Savior of all mankind. Will everyone be saved? Only

those who believe and receive the gospel are saved. Only those who believe can benefit from the free gift of eternal life offered to us through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to eat something he told them that he had food to eat that they did not know about. The Lord Jesus spoke to the woman about living water. Now the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples about spiritual food he was consuming. What is the food which Jesus consumed? It was the food of doing God's will. The Lord's food was doing the will of God.

This can also be our food today. When we obey the Lord it gives spiritual strength and vitality. The more we obey God the stronger we become. Our spiritual food is obeying God's will and putting his word into practice in our everyday lives.

Notice how often the Lord Jesus used word pictures like water and food to illustrate spiritual truth. This is basic to understanding the entire Bible. The Holy Spirit can teach us spiritual truth from God's word if we pay attention and think about what we are reading. Read, study, memorize, meditate, and pray over God's word. The Lord is saying more than "water" and "meat". He is talking about spiritual truth that we can only grasp and understand by faith.

John 4:39-42

The Samaritans believed that the Lord Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. How did they come to faith in Jesus? It all started with the testimony of one woman who told everyone in her village that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. She was persuasive enough that people came out to hear the Lord Jesus for themselves. When they heard the Lord Jesus speaking they came to personal faith that he was indeed the Christ the Savior of the world.

I find it interesting that this entire village easily came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Jews who had the scriptures and the truth in the Bible did not come to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps it was because the religious Jews had such an air tight religion that they could no longer open their heart to the truth of the Messiah standing right in front of them.

I find this attitude of having air tight theology very dangerous. People follow men's systems of theology so closely that they harden their hearts against any other reading of the Bible. I am a firm believer in the absolute truth, but we must remember that truth is not an abstract idea. Truth is a Person. Jesus said that he is the way, the truth, and the life. We cannot create a system of theology and call it "truth". At best, theology is useful as a signpost to point us to the real truth, and that real truth is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

These unbiased people simply heard the voice of Jesus and they believed in him. It doesn't record in this account that the Lord Jesus did any miracles or even healed anyone. He simply spoke to them, and they believed that he was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. This is the kind of faith I think God is looking for. He is looking for people who will simply take his word and believe and receive.

The Lord Jesus only stayed there two days. After two days he had to move on to somewhere else. Notice that there are different seasons in God's revelation of himself to this world. The first day was the day of Israel. The second day is the day of the church. The third day is the kingdom when God teaches the nations true spiritual authority. In each of these days Israel, church, and the nations continue to exist, but one is always in the forefront as God reveals himself in a different manner in time and space.

We see a progressive, chronological unveiling of God. However, we must always remember that God is outside of time and space. God is eternal. He was always Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the same way, the true people of God are also eternal. Within Israel, the church, and nations there exist an eternal remnant of true believers in the Messiah. They are the one people of God within the three days of Israel, church and the nations.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 4:43-54

A nobleman had a sick son. He came to the Lord Jesus for help. Instead of leaving with the man the Lord simply told the man that his son was healed. The man took the Lord's word and went back home. On the way his servants met him to told him know his son was better. The nobleman figured out from the servants that the same time his son got better was the same time the Lord Jesus gave him his word. As a result this man and his entire household believed upon the Lord Jesus.

One other thing I noticed in this exchange. At first the Lord rebuked this man and said that unless he saw a sign he would not believe. This seemed to be a common theme for people and faith. People want to see something before they will believe. However, true saving faith always takes God at his word. The Lord Jesus gave his word, and the man accepted the Lord Jesus at his word. The Lord did not go with the man or perform any sign or wonder. He simply gave him his word.

We have God's word today. We need to read God's word, study, memorize, meditate, receive, and believe God's word which he gave to us. Don't let any religious person cheat you out of God's promises in God's word. God gave us his exceeding great and precious promises. We can claim all of God's promises which he has made. God's word is eternal. It may have originally been written to certain people, but it is for us today as well. Read it, receive it, believe it. God's word is forever and ever. It will never fail to save, and deliver, and heal, and raise us from the dead.

John Chapter 5

John 5:1-9

The Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem because of a Jewish feast. This demonstrated that during his earthly life the Lord participated in religious tradition of the Jewish people. He met people where they were at. He went to the synagogue and he went to the temple. This was the religious and social structure he grew up in. It doesn't make it right or wrong. It was just how men lived at that time. How do people live today? Are we willing to meet people where they live, even if we disagree with their religious tradition or rules?

The Lord Jesus went into the temple and met a crippled man where he was at. The tradition of an angel stirring up water had not helped the man. Most of the time religious traditions do not help people. But the Lord Jesus met the man right where he was at. He asked him if he wanted to get better. The Lord spoke his word and this man was instantly healed. Tradition had never helped this man, but one word of power from the creator of the universe and he was instantly healed.

This healing took place on the Sabbath day. I believe the Lord did this kind of thing purposely on Sabbath days to reach the religious people of his day and provoke them. He did this so they would listen, and think, and repent of their hard hearts.

My take away from this passage is simple. We have to meet people where they are at. The religious traditions people hope in do not give them spiritual life, but if we are willing to go to where people are at then God can use us to help others to find true spiritual life. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

John 5:10-16

The insanity of religious people enforcing Sabbath rules stands in stark contrast to the compassion of the Lord Jesus in healing a man. This contrast was made on purpose. The Holy Spirit, through this written account in the Holy Bible, demonstrated how religious men can put more emphasis upon their traditions than upon a man who was healed. Not only were they more concerned about religious rules than this man but they also were ready to persecute and kill the Lord Jesus. If this seems extreme that is because it is supposed to appear extreme. God was showing how insane religious people were in the light of God's mercy.

Whatever good intentions these religious men may have had they completely lost the heart of God's law. God's law was put in place to bring men to the Lord Jesus Christ. But men took God's law and turned it into a system of oppression and control. They wove religion and the world system together into one fabric. Men become dangerous when they take God's word to justify the principles of the world. We see this all the time in the modern church. We count numbers of people in the church in order to maintain prestige. This is the same principle the world uses to maintain power in corporations or in the government. More people equals more prestige equals more power which equals more provision and more protection. This is the world system. When churches embrace this they stitch together the world system and God's word. What is the result? You see the result right here in this story. They wanted to kill the Lord Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath day.

How can we avoid this? The only way to avoid the danger of worldly religion is through humbling our hearts before God, repentance, and asking God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our protection from a hard heart and misapplication of God's word. Also, I would like to add that the church needs all the gifts which God provides through apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We need everything we can get to build the church in the proper way. In the modern church not all of these gifts are recognized or allowed to operate. As a result, the church over time becomes more worldly and conducts itself according to worldly principles, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to correct, rebuke, and humble us.

The Lord Jesus healed this man, and he told the man not to sin anymore or something worse might happen to him. There are situations where sin can lead to sickness. The Lord had mercy on him and healed him from his sickness. However, he told him not to sin anymore. Notice how this man went straight to the religious leaders and told on the Lord Jesus. As a result, the religious leaders persecuted Jesus. Do you think this man loved the Lord Jesus? How many people benefit from the Lord Jesus, and yet they have no love for the Lord Jesus?

John 5:17-23

Did the Lord Jesus break the Sabbath? Or did they perceive him as breaking the Sabbath because of their interpretation and tradition of God's law? We know the Lord Jesus never sinned so I'm sure what this means was that the Lord Jesus broke their interpretation of scripture and not the scripture itself. The Lord Jesus said that his Father worked and that he also worked. What was Jesus talking about? He seemed to be going against the law of Moses in promoting constant work. However, Jesus spoke in a spiritual sense. He said God was always at work sustaining creation. God did not just create the world in six days and then go on vacation. When God rested it was in a different sense than what we think of rest. A man might go to sleep when he rests but God never sleeps.

The meaning of the Sabbath, therefore, was changed from something meant as a blessing to man into becoming a religious burden which prevented people from using common sense. They could take care of an animal on the Sabbath but people could not be healed on the Sabbath? This showed how backward and upside down their thinking became. We see this same kind of logic in today's world also, but to an extreme that in my opinion even surpasses the people in those days.

The Lord Jesus described his relationship to his heavenly Father. He said that he didn't do anything except what he saw his heavenly Father doing. God the Father and Jesus were in complete harmony and agreement in everything which Jesus said and did. When you see Jesus, then, you see the Father. The Lord Jesus never did anything or said anything which was not a perfect image reflection of God the Father.

The Lord Jesus continued and said that even as God raised people from the dead, so also this power was given to the Son of God. Later in chapter 11 we see the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, even though Lazarus was dead four days. The Lord Jesus raised him from the dead. Jesus is God. He and the heavenly Father are one God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one God.

We cannot honor God if we do not honor the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot know God at all if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the only way to God. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through the Lord Jesus Christ. **John 14:6.**

Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ is the Lord, and He is our Savior.

John 5:24-30

One important message from this scripture was the reality of a final judgment. The Lord Jesus said everyone who died or will die would one day hear his voice and come out of their graves. They will be raised up and then they will stand before God to give an account of their lives. If a person did good they will be in the resurrection to life. Those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. God separates people into two groups. The righteous and the evil. There is good, there is evil. There is light, there is darkness. There is holy, there is profane. This understanding of God and his universe is fundamental to understanding the Bible and salvation.

God made us. He is the creator. He is the judge of all things. Every single person who has ever lived will give an account of their life to God. Only those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his work upon Calvary will be saved. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves men. What is the

gospel? Christ died for our sins upon the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This message is available to everyone who ever lived. Everyone who wants to know God can receive this message of salvation. God has made the good news available to anyone who seeks to know the truth of who God is. Anyone who will seek after God can find him, and the Lord will show that man how he can be saved through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice this phrase that the Lord Jesus kept repeating: "the hour is coming". There is an appointed time on God's calendar that everything in the Bible will be fulfilled. A time is appointed for each man to die, for each man to be raised up, and for each man to face God on judgment day. No one will escape this. It is as real as the physical laws which hold this universe together. No one will get away from what the Lord Jesus described in these verses.

How do we prepare for this? How do we get ready? Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ today. Call upon his name. Cry out to the Lord Jesus to save you, forgive you, and make you into a new person. Read **Romans 10:9-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

John 5:31-40

It appeared the religious people surrounding the Lord Jesus tried to stumble him on legal technicality concerning having witnesses to verify a testimony. He took them up on their challenge and proved, using their own logic, that he had plenty of witnesses to verify the truth of what he said. Then he made it clear that human testimony was not necessary, or reliable, because he already had God's testimony of who he was. God testified to who his son Jesus Christ was. This testimony is in the Bible. Those who reject the Holy Bible reject God's testimony, and those who reject God's testimony reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus told them to search the scriptures, because the scriptures testify and point to him. There are many prophecies and descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament that testify to who he is. They should have known who he was. But they would not come to him. Why?

One reason was the way in which they read the scripture. They could only interpret scripture in a historical context. They were unable to see that the scripture applied to their present circumstances.

Have you ever met a Christian like that? They know the Bible but large portions of the Bible they claim no longer apply to the Christian today. These people attempt to minimize the supernatural in God's word and relegate it only to history. Why? Because they are not willing to deal with the living God who looks right at them in the face. They are unable to deal with a God who listens to every word they say, and watches everything they do. They can deal with a God of doctrine. But they cannot deal with the God who speaks today.

John 5:41-47

Who will be this person who comes in his own name?

The Lord Jesus pointed forward to a time when a man will come in his own name. This is the man of sin, the beast, the Antichrist. He is the ultimate worshiper of self. People will not think it strange when he calls himself "god" because that is the doctrine of Satan and everyone will follow the doctrine of Satan when this man of sin arrives in this world. When he reveals himself the Holy Spirit will remove

the restraining power of the church. The church will be raptured up to meet the Lord in the clouds. With the church gone this Antichrist will take control of the entire world system. He will enter the temple of God in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be a god.

Man in his fallen sinful state rejects the Lord Jesus Christ and worships himself. This is evident in history. Men worship other men and the names of men. We see this as a problem in the church when men follow the names of men, denominations, and man-made systems of theology. Men who are not baptized in the Holy Spirit naturally follow the names and doctrines of men.

The Lord Jesus asked them how could they believe when they received honor from one another? This was the worship of self by worshiping men. Men want to worship other men or themselves rather than worshiping God. This shows how much man hates God and loves himself.

The religious people in those days knew scripture better than anyone but they did not believe the scripture. The Lord Jesus said if they believed Moses they would have believed in him.

It is terrifying to think that people can know the scripture so well and yet not have a relationship with Jesus. Yet this is evident throughout the religious world and in churches that call themselves Christian.

Do not be deceived by those who worship self. Do not be deceived by those who say that Christianity is about the "here and now". It is not. It is about a world that is coming. It is about the future kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming back. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of our lives. Are you ready?

Call on the name of Jesus.

John Chapter 6

John 6:1-6

People followed the Lord Jesus because of the immediate benefit to their lives. Not all these people were interested in anything spiritual that he said to them. They may not have been interested in salvation, repentance, heaven, hell, or anything else. But they saw people who were healed. They wanted to healing as well. Suffering people looked for answers to their problems. In the Lord Jesus they found someone who provided real solutions to their problems. I'm not saying this was bad or good, but was usually one of the main reasons why people found the Lord Jesus. There was usually a crushing need in their life which drove them to seek a solution in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was what happened to me. When I was a young man I was crushed beneath the weight of addiction and alcoholism. I suffered from various mental and emotional problems which came about as a result of a combination of several things including the way I was raised, and being exposed to people who were involved in occult practices, and also because of my own rebellious attitude. My rebellion was not directed at authorities or people as it was to isolating myself, living in my own head and imagination, and also seeking after experiences. I was lost in darkness and did not even know I was in spiritual darkness.

However, the Lord reached me. He constantly sent Christians to intervene at different stages in my life. They pointed me to the Lord. Finally, God got my attention. I was broken, I was humbled, and finally I listened to him.

Most people do not come to the Lord because they think they need spiritual salvation. Most people seek God because they are hurting as a result of their sin and foolishness. They are sick in their minds, in their souls, and in their body.

The Lord did not turn these people away. He healed them. He fed them. He gave them his word.

The most valuable thing the Lord offered was himself. Many people would receive gifts and healing and salvation from the Lord, but the most important thing anyone could receive from the Lord was the Lord Jesus himself. He is life. He is light. He is everything a man needs to live, and have purpose, and meaning, and direction. He is all you really need.

John 6:7-13

The Lord Jesus challenged his disciples to feed the crowd of people who were gathered. He did this as a test to see how they would react, though he already knew what he would do. It was interesting that Andrew saw the possibility in a young boy's lunch of five barley loaves and two small fishes. The Lord Jesus took this, had the people sit down, he gave thanks, and distributed the food to the disciples. The disciples then distributed the food to the crowd of people. This was a miracle. They had plenty to eat and there was food left over. The Lord Jesus had them collect the leftovers so nothing was wasted.

This miracle was proof that God is our provider. **Psalms 23** taught us that the Lord is our shepherd and we shall not want. The Lord provided them with the food they ate every day. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the heavenly Father and say, "Give us this day our daily bread". This was an acknowledgment that God our Father is our Provider. We should never forget this. This was a basic lesson in the Christian life, but if we do not remember the lesson we will face temptations in our walk of faith. How can we believe God for anything in life if we cannot believe he would take care of our basic, physical needs like food and clothing?

Also, if we forget this lesson it causes us to live in fear. Living in fear is the opposite of living in faith. When people are afraid they make bad decisions, they make bad agreements, and the bad agreements pull them further away from a relationship with God. This pointed back to what the Lord Jesus taught in his parable about the seed which was sown in the thorns. The cares of life make us unable to bear fruit for God's kingdom. If we are not bearing fruit for God then what good are we as a Christian? See how this ties together? So, like I said, it is important to learn that God is our provider. This is the first lesson God taught Israel in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:3, *"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger; and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."*

This was the first temptation Satan hit the Lord with. Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. This was the test of provision. I also call this the "bread" test. This is basic to living the Christian life. We must learn that God is our provider.

John 6:14-21

These verses give us insight into why the Lord Jesus so often tried to minimize his miracles. He would heal a person and then tell them not to tell anyone else. He often did things in such a way as to not draw attention to himself. We see why here in these verses. These men were about to force the Lord Jesus to become a king. We might wonder how can anyone force someone to become a king? I do not know, but it was a real danger that the Lord Jesus avoided with the crowd. I can only remember twice where the Lord Jesus did this miracle of producing food for a crowd. Sometimes when the Lord Jesus did supernatural miracles he would only have a few of his disciples go with him. He would raise people from the dead behind closed doors. The Lord purposely avoided the position of a political leader. That was not his goal or purpose. His goal was to be the Lamb of God who gave himself upon the cross of Calvary for our sins.

I'm always fascinated by this account of how the Lord Jesus walked upon water out to where his disciples were at. The scripture says when he got into the boat that they were "immediately" at the land. To me this sounds like some kind of supernatural relocation. It reminds me of how in the science fiction TV series Star Trek how they would get beamed from the surface of a planet up to the mother ship. The Lord Jesus literally beamed the entire boat of men from the sea to the land in one second. The only example which came close to this in the Old Testament was when Elijah was raptured up to heaven by the chariots of God. You might also say Enoch was translated as well. In the New Testament there was also Philip who witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch in the book of Acts. After he baptized the Ethiopian in water Philip was raptured away by the Holy Spirit to another location.

This sudden disappearing and reappearing will probably be something which we will be able to do when we receive our new bodies after the resurrection. The Lord Jesus after his resurrection could appear and disappear at will. Is it possible that we will be able to move from one place to another like this as well?

Why would anyone doubt the rapture of believers? If Jesus can rapture an entire boat of men from the sea to the shore, then he can rapture all of us from the earth up to the clouds. It will happen. Get ready! The Lord Jesus will return and we will be changed and raptured out of here.

John 6:22-29

These people were confused as to how the Lord Jesus disappeared. They got in boats and went to where they thought he might be, and when they found him they questioned him. This was the danger the Lord Jesus perceived in them. This was an aggressive crowd of people. He escaped from them, but then they found him again. However, it appeared this time the crowd was smaller, or because they were confused by his disappearance were only asking questions. It was almost as if they might have challenged him.

The Lord Jesus turned the tables on them. Instead of replying to their implied accusations he told them plainly what they were really after was someone who would give them free food. They wanted a king who would take care of them. They were focused on their own needs or desires. However, the Lord wanted them to focus on their spiritual need. They were sinners and needed a Savior. They didn't need a new political leader. They needed to be saved from their sins. But before they could be saved from their sin they first had to become aware of this dangerous spiritual condition. They needed to know they were sinners.

In these verses he showed them that the priority in life was to learn how to live in the spirit. He told them to labor for food which does not perish. This "food" pointed to faith in his word. The word of God is our food and drink. This was the whole message of Israel wandering in the wilderness. God wanted them to learn that everything we need in life is found by faith in God alone. Our provision does not come from the natural world. It comes from God who made the natural world. If we are in a right relationship with God then everything in life falls into its correct place. The first priority is our relationship with God.

Many people have a lot that the world system offers, but because they have no spiritual life they are miserable, depressed, angry, hateful, and filled with malice. Look around at the powerful people with billions of dollars in the world. Can you tell me those people are happy? No, they are miserable people filled with malice, bitterness, and spite. Just listen to the words coming out of their mouth and see that power cannot satisfy the soul in man.

The Lord Jesus told them that the work of God was to believe in the one whom he sent. God sent Jesus Christ into this world. The most important thing you can ever do in life is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything else pales in comparison to this one thing.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 6:30-35

Moses did not give them bread. They misquoted or misread the Bible. The Lord Jesus corrected them, and pointed to himself as the true bread of life. This was one of my favorite scriptures where the Lord spoke of himself. He said that he was the bread of life. He is our Provider, but more than that, he is our very provision. He is the bread we need for our spirit and our life. His word gives life. This is why I stress the importance of staying in God's word. We must hear the word, read the word, study the word, chew it, ponder it, meditate on it. We need to get the word in our mind, heart, and spirit. It is spiritual life for us. This world outside is full of death. We need the word of God to give us life. Jesus is the bread of life and the living waters.

The people asked the Lord Jesus to give them the bread. However, he stood right there. They had him. He was there with them. And yet they were still asking for "bread". They wanted something else beside the Lord Jesus. Isn't this just like people? We always want something more than or other than the simple word of God in Jesus Christ. We want some new formula or philosophy or teaching. But the Lord gave us himself. He is the word of God. He provided himself an offering for us. He is our food. He is our water. He is our life. He is everything we need to live.

John 6:36-40

We have a precious promise in these verses. The Lord Jesus said, "*...him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out*". If you come to the Lord Jesus, and surrender your heart and life to him, he will take you in. He will not leave you out in the cold. The Lord is not willing that any perish. The Lord Jesus invited us to come to him and find rest for our souls. He sent out the gospel invitation to anyone who would hear the message. Anyone who heard the message, and believed, and received, was welcome by the Lord. The Lord Jesus did not turn anyone away. Do I? Do I turn people away? Stop and think about

it. God, please help me. Please help me never to turn people away. Help me to have an attitude that I am willing to help other people.

The Lord Jesus declared that he came to do the will of his Father. If we want to follow the example of the Lord Jesus then we should deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. We are not here to do what we want to with our lives. We are here to do God's will. God is our creator. He owns us. We need to listen to him, and do what he says. Lay aside your own opinions, your own thoughts, your own stubborn attitude. Humble yourself and listen to what the Lord says. Hear, believe, receive, and obey.

The Lord Jesus said he was not going to lose anything his Father gave him. If we belong to Jesus then he will not lose us. It was the Lord who did the work to save us, it was the Lord who kept us, and it is the Lord who will bring us all the way home to himself. This gives great comfort and assurance of salvation. This is God's work in us. It is not the work we do. The only work God required us to do was to believe in his son Jesus Christ.

The Lord clearly said there would be a resurrection. Death is not the end. We will go on living. Those who reject God and the gospel and Jesus will go on existing somewhere forever but separated from God. What will that separation be like? God is light, God is love, God is life. What do you think being separated from light, love, and life will be like? Think about it.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

John 6:41-51

These people thought they knew the Lord Jesus because they knew his family and where he grew up. How many of us know that you cannot know a person based on where they grew up or their family? They certainly did not know who Jesus was, even though they thought they did. This is where familiarity can cloud the minds of people. When Jesus revealed who he really was they rejected him because they thought they already knew who he was. We don't know what we think we know. This requires humility to let go of our opinions and what we think that we know, and receive the truth about who Jesus Christ really is. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He is fully God. He is fully man. He is the God Man.

The Lord Jesus said that no one can come to him unless the Father in heaven drew him. No one can know who Jesus really is except God reveals it to him. This is what the Lord Jesus said to Peter. Peter said that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah of God. The Lord Jesus told Peter that he was blessed and learned this by revelation from God the Father. This also reminds me of what John says in **1 John 4:2**, *"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:"* Also, **1 Corinthians 12:3**, *"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."*

The Lord Jesus continued to press upon his listeners that he was the bread of life that came down from heaven. He told them if anyone ate this bread he would live forever. Eternal life came by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no eternal life except through the Son of God Jesus Christ.

John 6:52-59

The Lord Jesus did not speak literally about his flesh and blood. He spoke spiritually. His words were meant to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. It takes the Holy Spirit in us to enable us to interpret the spiritual meaning of God's word. Many times we can understand the Bible in a literal way, but there are times when we interpret God's word spiritually. To know the difference is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Man in his natural mind is not able to truly discern what God's word says. It is spiritual. The words of the Lord Jesus are spiritual words. Jesus told us this. He said that the words he spoke were spirit and life.

We cannot separate the Bible from the person of the Lord Jesus. This is a mistake people make. They put so much emphasis on Bible doctrine or systematic interpretation that they miss the living, active application of the present greatness of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is a real person. He did not stop being a real person when the Bible was finished being written. He is still alive today, and is actively involved in the lives of people today.

Those of us who feed upon the Lord Jesus have eternal life. We must continue to abide in him and in his word. His word gives us life for each day. Stay in the word. Stay in prayer, too.

John 6:60-71

The Lord shows us how to interpret what he said to these people. He said his words were spiritual. They were spirit and life. The people attempted to understand what the Lord Jesus said in a literal, earthly sense, but he spoke to them using spiritual language. The controversy over this grew so big it affected his closest disciples. Finally, the Lord had to confront the disciples over this controversy. Notice how people outside the church, even unbelievers, can instigate controversy which can blow like a raging wind through the church.

The Lord confronted his disciples and asked the twelve disciples if they also would go away. This confrontation seemed to snap them back into reality. As usual Peter replied for the entire group and affirmed their faith that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ of God, and that he had the words of eternal life.

The Lord Jesus then said something interesting. He said he chose the twelve disciples, and yet one of the twelve was a devil, as well as those who turned back from him. He was talking about Judas Iscariot. The Lord knew who the traitor was in this group.

Notice in the King James Bible the verse where the disciples turn back was John chapter six verse sixty six. This is 666. Perhaps that is a coincidence, but it is interesting nonetheless at how tied together scripture is within itself.

There may be times when the Lord gives us a word we do not understand. It is at that point we must simply choose to trust in the Lord. We don't understand everything. It is impossible this side of eternity to understand much at all. What we do understand we should be faithful to obey. I think it is important to remember the proverb that says, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths."

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

John Chapter 7

John 7:1-10

There was a lot happening in these verses. Let's start with the phrase "*neither did his brethren believe in him*". This was his natural family members. These were the other sons of Mary and Joseph. They did not believe that the Lord Jesus was who he said he was. We can also see that these men, as a result of their unbelief, operated under the principles of the world system.

What principle of the world did they display? They represented the idea that if you want to have prestige in the world then you have to promote yourself.

However, if you look closely at the life of Christ, he repeatedly did the exact opposite of this. He humbled himself. He told people not to reveal who he was. He told people not to spread it around that he healed them. When there was a lot of people amassing he would slip away and go somewhere else. He avoided men who tried to make him a king.

Why? Because the Lord Jesus did not operate according to the principles of the world system. He operated according to the principle of the kingdom of God. In God's kingdom, men do not make a name for themselves. They do not promote their own name or seek position, prestige, or power. Instead, in God's kingdom men humble themselves and seek to take the lowest place.

The Lord Jesus taught humility, and he also lived it. We see that the Lord Jesus humbled himself. He took the lowest place. He was obedient even to the death of the cross, the lowest form of humiliation ever known in this world.

When men do not believe in God then they fall underneath the spell of the world system. It is a spiritual law. It is like gravity. If you do not believe in God then you will live your life for yourself. Your goal will always be to exalt yourself, to lift yourself up, to justify yourself, to defend yourself, to provide for yourself, to protect yourself, and to worship yourself.

However, if a man knows the Lord Jesus he will not live this way. He will humble himself, and be obedient to the Holy Spirit. He will seek to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and make the Lord Jesus known.

The Lord Jesus said he came in the name of his father. He did not come in his own name. There will be another who will come in his own name, and that man will be accepted by the world system. The world system in the last days will make a man their king. This king will come in his own name and will exalt himself as a god. Everyone will accept him.

But God's kingdom will come despite him. This man of sin will be overthrown and cast into the lake of fire. The Lord Jesus will take the throne because God the Father has prepared that throne for him alone. May God's kingdom come, and may God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

John 7:11-24

As he always did the Lord Jesus divided people into two camps. We cannot remain neutral toward the Lord. We will either be for him or we will be against him. When we are truly confronted by the Lord Jesus we have no other choice but to be on his side or against him. He does not leave in-between

ground. Do we ever wonder why? It is because of God's nature. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. There is no compromise with God.

People kept these conversations private because they were afraid of the religious leaders. They were more afraid of men than they were of God.

Finally the Lord Jesus did go up to the feast and taught people in the temple. People were amazed at him because they knew his history. He did not have a certificate from their school of learning. How did he learn all of this? Where did he get his doctrine from? The Lord Jesus challenged them that if they would put into practice what he taught then they could find out for themselves that he spoke from God. The same is true today. If we will obey the Holy Bible we will find out that it is God's word. We can discover for ourselves that the Bible is true by putting it into practice in our every day life situations. Obedience will bring the knowledge of the truth of God's word.

The Lord Jesus knew these people did not believe in him. Not only were they in unbelief but they plotted to kill Jesus. The Lord Jesus knew their plans to kill him. However, here he was, reaching out to them on their own ground. He exhorted them to judge "righteous judgment". This is still important for us to remember today. Do not judge people by their outward appearance, but instead judge righteously. We should only judge people by their actions. What kind of fruit does this tree produce? Is it bad fruit? Then we can know we have a bad tree. If it is good fruit, we can know we have a good tree.

John 7:25-36

Did the Lord Jesus use the crowds to save himself from the religious leaders? The leaders wanted to arrest and kill him. The Bible says that it was not yet the Lord's "time" to be taken. The time for his arrest had not yet arrived. God has a set schedule for events to take place. Even though the scripture said that the religious leaders feared the crowd that does not mean it was the crowd which stopped them from arresting Jesus. It was God himself who kept his Son free. The Lord Jesus spoke boldly. Didn't he know people were out to kill him? Yes, he did know. Did the Lord Jesus put his trust in the crowd to save him from the religious leaders? Do you mean to tell me that the Lord Jesus trusted in the crowd who in just a few days would cry out to Pilate for him to be crucified? No, the Lord Jesus did not rely upon the "power of the people" to accomplish God's will. God doesn't rely on a crowd of people to accomplish his will in nations and in people.

This humanistic, political idea that we need to amass a crowd of conservatives to change the tide of politics and in so doing save our country is not from the Bible. This kind of thinking comes from the Satanic world system whose power is based on numbers. God's power is not based upon numbers of men. God demonstrated this over and over. He took a lowly Gideon and a few hundred men to defeat the Midianites. He showed over and over that he took a small group of people to destroy the strongholds of Satan. Look at these twelve lowly apostles of the Lord. How could twelve apostles turn the world upside down? They did not have crowds of people on their side. They simply moved in God's power and boldly proclaimed the gospel.

Pastors should go back to preaching the gospel instead of trying to encourage their congregations to engage in politics. Let the dead bury the dead. Let the world take care of the things of the world. But our job is much higher than the world system. Our job is the kingdom. Our job is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our job is to influence the world, not through our humanistic efforts in politics, but in our faithful proclamation of the truth.

But can't we do both? To the scriptures! What did Jesus do? What did the apostles do? What is the example laid before us in scriptures as to the purpose of Christians and the church? Societal revolution? That may happen, but it will not happen through numbers of people, but rather through the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

John 7:37-43

The Lord's invitation to drink reminded me of his conversation with the woman at the well. The Lord used the word picture of natural thirst to point to something much deeper. Inside every man is a spiritual thirst for spiritual water. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like a fountain of water inside our spirit. I have experienced this and I know that it is true. What the Lord Jesus said here was the absolute truth. The Holy Spirit is like a well of water inside the soul springing up giving us abundant life. He provides hope, and peace, and a desire to live life fully. He fills up all the empty places in our soul, our mind, our will, and our emotions. The Lord is here. You can feel him if you will believe in him. The Lord desires to make himself known to us today.

There were people then who believed in the Lord Jesus. They believed he was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy about the Messiah. Other people did not believe because they did not know the history of the life of Jesus. They knew the Bible, but they did not know the history of Jesus. If they had known then they could have understood that he fulfilled every prophecy about the Messiah.

The Lord caused division among the people. There were always people who believed, and there were people who would not choose to believe in the Lord Jesus. There were sheep, there were goats. There were believers; there were unbelievers. There was wheat, and there were tares. This will be how it is until the end of the age.

Believe on the Lord Jesus today. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ of God. He is our Lord and our Savior.

John 7:44-53

The men could not arrest Jesus. It was not because the crowd protected the Lord Jesus. It was not the "power of the people" that kept the Lord Jesus safe from those who wanted to kill him. It was the word of God. Those who were sent to arrest Jesus came back to their leaders and said, "Never man spake like this man."

What did that mean? There is power in God's word. It was not yet the time for the Lord Jesus to be arrested. All he did was speak his word, and those men were powerless. It was not the power of the people that protected the Lord Jesus. It was the power of God's word.

We should proclaim God's word and not promote politics or the "power of the people". God's word is where the power to change the world is kept. It is in the proclamation of the gospel that the true hope of our country and the world abides.

It astounds to me that so many miss the simple truth of the gospel!

The religious leaders revealed that unless they said a man was authorized to preach then he was illegitimate. This reveals that man-made religion relies upon the approval and praise of men.

If a man was in the ministry because of the approval of man (including votes, or certificates, or titles, or ordinations), then he must ask himself if he was called by God. Some men were called by God and were affirmed by men. I am not against the affirmation of men in ministry. However, when we only rely upon men's approval and praise then we eventually end up like these religious leaders. They opposed the presence of God who stood among them. God stood before them as a man and they opposed him. This showed how fragile the approval of man was in ratifying God's authority or God's calling upon a man's life.

Again, those people thought they knew who the Lord Jesus was. They did not know his full life story, or they would not have made the argument about him coming from Galilee. They did not know the story of his birth, or how he was raised by Mary and Joseph. The Lord Jesus fulfilled all of the prophecies regarding the Messiah, but they did not take the time to investigate this. They judged him merely by appearance and the facts they assumed. This was how prideful, religious people operated. Make a note of this. Prideful, religious people do not really care to get to know you as a person. They are content with judging you from afar off.

John Chapter 8

John 8:1-11

The Lord Jesus was challenged again by the religious leaders. They tried to trap the Lord Jesus by bringing a woman caught in adultery before him for judgment. He turned the table on them and challenged them that whoever was without sin let him cast the first stone. Each man was convicted by his own conscience and walked away. The woman and Jesus were left alone. The Lord Jesus asked the woman if anyone condemned her. No one condemned her. Then the Lord Jesus said he did not condemn her either. He told her to leave her life of sin.

This confrontation revealed a lot about human nature, and also about the Lord Jesus Christ.

These men were capable of using this helpless woman as a tool to trap the Lord Jesus. They did not care about this woman. Remember, these were religious people. All they cared about was trapping the Lord Jesus so they could accuse him.

This also revealed to us that the Lord Jesus came to seek and save sinners. He did not come to condemn us but to save us. The Lord wants to save us from our sins. He wants us to leave our life of sin and follow him. He offers forgiveness. He paid the price for our sins. He simply asks us to receive his free gift of forgiveness and to agree with him. Turn away from a life of sin. Follow the Lord Jesus.

How should we then live? We should agree with God, leave the life of sin, and treat others in the same way the Lord Jesus did. The Lord Jesus offered grace and mercy to the woman. We should do the same. We should offer people grace and mercy. We should extend the hand of mercy. We extend the hand of grace to people. It is up to others if they want to accept God's free gift of eternal life.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 8:12-20

The Lord Jesus is the light of the world. If a man follows the Lord Jesus he shall not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

This statement reminded me of **Proverbs 4:18-19**, "*But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.*"

People who turn their back on the Lord Jesus go straight into spiritual darkness. What is that like? I don't want to find out. I would rather stay on the path of following the Lord Jesus. I've followed the Lord Jesus for over 30 years now, and I don't remember anymore what that kind of spiritual darkness felt like. I don't want to be reminded.

Sometimes the Lord will hide himself from us for a season to let us know what it felt like, but even in those seasons I knew the Lord was still there. I knew I could still hold to his promises in his word.

What is it like to not have any promises from God's word to believe in? What is it like to only have random positive affirmations to cling to? What is it like to cling to man-made philosophies or man-made systems of spirituality? It is darkness. The people who have never known the Lord do not know they are in darkness. They have the sparks of light that come from man's philosophy. Man is made in God's image so he can throw a few sparks of enlightenment here and there. But that is all it is. Sparks. Nothing that lasts but a moment.

"Sparks" reminded me of another verse. **Isaiah 50:11**, "*Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*"

Those who follow man-made "sparks" will die in the darkness. They will die in darkness and then fall into an abyss of darkness that never ends. What is the darkness like? I do not ever want to find out. It is terrifying to me to even consider what outer darkness might be like.

I want to get as close to God's light as I possibly can. I want to live forever in the light of the Lord Jesus. He is the light of the world. I want to walk in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever. He is my creator. He is my maker. He is my redeemer. He knows my name. I belong to him. Nothing can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

John 8:21-30

The Lord Jesus ascended back to heaven after his death, burial, and resurrection. His apostles were witnesses to his resurrection and his ascension back to heaven.

The religious leaders tried to cover up the facts of the gospel. Where the Lord Jesus went they would never be able to go. The only way to the Father is through the Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to God. (**John 14:6**). The Lord Jesus told

them that if they did not believe in him they would die in their sins. This is the heart of the gospel. If men do not believe in the Lord Jesus they will die in their sins. Let this sink deep into the heart, the mind, into the spirit. If men do not believe in the Lord Jesus they will die in their sins. If men do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ they will perish in their sins. Let this thought shake us to the core.

They should have known who the Lord Jesus was. The Bible they had pointed to who he was. He was the fulfillment of every type, shadow, prophecy, and word picture in the Old Testament. If they wanted to believe they could have because there was plenty of evidence of who Jesus Christ was. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ.

The Lord Jesus said they would lift up the Son of Man. This pointed forward to his death upon the cross at Calvary. There were people who listened to him and who came to the saving knowledge of who he was when they saw him nailed to the cross. There were people whom God opened their heart and spiritual eyes. There were people who heard, saw, and believed in Jesus. They knew he was the lamb of God.

Others said they believed, but as we see in this chapter their faith only went so far.

How far are we prepared to go in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we willing to fully trust in him as our Lord and Savior? Are we able to believe that he is our provider, our protector, and our portion forever?

John 8:31-44

The Lord Jesus saw the heart of the issue with those who professed faith in him. He saw their root problem was sin in their lives. The only way to deal with sin was to stay in the word. The Lord Jesus said if they would continue in his word they would be his disciples indeed and they would know the truth and the truth would set them free. What was their response? They wanted to argue with him.

This resistance from the people who listened to Jesus demonstrated the truth of a parable which Jesus taught about the sower who went out to sow his seed. The seed fell on different kinds of soil. Some people initially heard the word of God with joy. But as time went on they were offended and turned away and had no fruit. This was what happened here between the Lord Jesus and these "believers". They heard the word at first with joy. They believed in Jesus. But as they continued to listen they were offended. What were they offended at? The Lord Jesus said they had sin in their life. The only way they could be set free from sin in their life was to allow him to correct them. They must cooperate with the physician if they want to be made whole.

The problem most people have is that they feel like their opinions are as valid as God's word. They believe their intelligence is greater than the wisdom found in the word of God. They do not accept correction. As a result, they will remain in their sinful condition.

This is so important for anyone to grow spiritually. We cannot continue to grow if we do not continue to abide in God's word. If we stop listening to God's word of correction then we will stop growing. This also parallels the apostle Peter's teaching on spiritual growth in **2 Peter 1**. We must continue to add to our faith. We must continue to listen and abide in the word of God.

Because many people put their faith in Bible doctrines but have a hard heart they convince themselves they are right with God. Even men who were living in bondage to sin convince themselves they are right with God because they intellectually believe a Bible doctrine. Knowledge or belief in Bible doctrine is not enough. We must continue in God's word. We must continue to grow spiritually in the Lord. We must continue to put off the old man and put on the new man and be renewed in the spirit of our mind daily. This process of sanctification must continue and the only way it can continue is by continuing in the Lord's word.

These men chose rather to argue with the Lord and defend themselves. Because of the stubborn position these men took with the Lord Jesus he was forced to place them in the category of the devil. Everyone who rejects the word of the Lord find themselves on the side of the devil. This is what Adam and Eve found out. As soon as they rejected God's word they found themselves on the side of the devil.

God loves us and sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world to save us from ourselves, from sin, from the devil, from the world, and from death. Put your faith and trust in Christ alone. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

John 8:45-59

They did not believe the Lord Jesus because he told them the truth. This is an amazing statement. It revealed to me that if someone tells the truth it won't matter if people are already in agreement with the devil. The devil is the first and ultimate liar. He is the father of lies. If men do not believe in God then they are on the side of the devil. You can tell the truth to people like this all day and they will never believe you. Why? Because they are liars. Liars cannot believe the truth because of who they are. This is startling to realize. It also should help us not to be so upset when people do not understand simple truths like a man is a man or a woman is a woman. Obvious truth like this is completely over the head of this generation. Why? Because they are liars and devils. They cannot hear or believe truth because they have sided with Satan.

The Lord Jesus said when a man is of God he hears God's words. If someone doesn't hear God's word it is because he is not of God. Instead, he is of his father the devil. Those who are of God hear God's words. People do not listen to Christians. Why? Those who don't listen to the Christian already took the side of the devil. Who is of the devil? Every single person on this planet who rejects Jesus Christ is of the devil.

1 John 5:19, *"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* The whole world is under control of wickedness, sin, the devil. The whole world. Let that sink in. That means every body. Every man, woman, boy, and girl on this planet who rejects Jesus Christ is wicked.

Ephesians 2:2, *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"*

The *"prince of the power of the air"* is Satan. This prince is the devil. This verse says every single person who rejects Jesus Christ belongs to the devil and the devil works through every person who is not a born again Christian.

This is scary but it is true. If you are a Christian right now you know what I am saying is true. If you are not a Christian and you read this you can't believe or accept this. Because I am telling the truth. I

am quoting Bible verses and telling the truth. If you reject the Holy Bible then you belong to Satan. You are of your father the devil.

These people could not deny the great works which the Lord Jesus did. Instead of believing in him and continuing in his word they turned on him. They accused him of being of the devil. This is what happens when people reject the truth. They begin to call what is good evil. They begin to call what is evil good. Wait and see. We will see this happen. Those who reject Jesus Christ call evil good. They call what is good evil.

It is amazing to me how clear the Bible is, how precise, how accurate. I love God's word. I love the truth. I love Jesus. Jesus is the truth. He speaks the truth. I want to listen to every word Jesus speaks to me. I ask for him to correct me and deliver me from deceit, delusion, and deception. I ask the Lord to shine his light on me. I pray the Lord will fill me with a love for the truth that will save, deliver, and protect me from the massive delusion sweeping this planet in the last days.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, *"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

God gives people what they want. Do they want lies? God gives them a delusion so overwhelming they have no chance of finding the truth. You cannot be on the fence with God. If you do not get totally on the side of Jesus he will push you off the fence. You are not in control. You will submit to a master, whether that master be the Lord Jesus, or whether that master be the devil. Choose today. If you make no choice then the choice will be made for you.

Today is the day of salvation! Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus while you still have time.

John Chapter 9

John 9:1-7

The Lord Jesus noticed this man. This was different from most accounts where the Lord Jesus healed people. Most of the time the person would approach the Lord Jesus, or cry out to the Lord Jesus, or perhaps they would try to touch him somehow. This time was different. The Lord Jesus noticed this man. The gospel of John recorded events where the Lord Jesus reached out to people. Notice the account with the Samaritan woman and the account of when the Lord Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda. Here was another record of the Lord Jesus when he noticed someone and reached out to them personally. John recorded the personal attention which the Lord Jesus gave to individual people in need.

The disciples paid attention when the Lord Jesus noticed this man. They asked the Lord Jesus a question which revealed their beliefs about how people commonly viewed the sick.

First, why did the disciples think the Lord Jesus knew the history of this man or his parents? Evidently, the disciples had this impression of the Lord Jesus. Did they think that he knew all about the people he came into contact with? Perhaps they thought he previously knew the man? Or did they think Jesus had

supernatural knowledge of people and their personal history? It is interesting that they asked such an unusual question. It also revealed that they assumed the cause of the man's blindness. They assumed he was blind because of sin. Their question was whether the sin came from the man or his parents. They did not ask the Lord Jesus if there was a sin committed but rather who sinned and caused the man's blindness.

However the Lord Jesus knew the man's history he explained that the man's blindness was not the result of sin. This explanation seemed to infer that Jesus had the ability to know everything about a person's personal history. He knew this man was not blind because of sin. How did he know this? He knew it because he was God in the flesh. God is all knowing. The Lord Jesus knew everything about the people he met. He knew their thoughts, their attitudes, and their life stories. The Lord Jesus knew who people were. He knew Judas Iscariot was a traitor when he chose him as one of his twelve disciples. The Lord Jesus knows everything about us.

The idea that sickness is always a result of personal sin is still believed by many people today. There are cases where a person's sickness is directly related to their personal sin. Remember when the Lord Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda he followed up with him later and told him to quit sinning or something worse would happen to him. However, there is not always a direct correlation between a person's disability or sickness and sin in their life. It is unfair to always assume that if a person is sick, or poor, or suffering in life that it is because of personal sin. Sometimes bad things happen to good people, as well. The book of Job teaches this lesson to us.

The Lord Jesus used a different method when he healed this man. I can't think of another example of where the Lord Jesus used spit and clay to anoint someone and heal them of blindness. He told the man to wash and he returned with his sight. What the Lord Jesus did for the man, combined with the man's obedience, produced his healing. He did what the Lord Jesus told him to do and came back with his sight. This is a pattern which can be seen in the Bible. Remember Naaman the Syrian in the Old Testament is another example of this pattern.

The Lord Jesus explained the man's blindness was for the purpose of demonstrating God's power and glory. The Lord Jesus healed the man but the man's story was just beginning when he was healed.

The Lord Jesus came into this world to save us. He came to seek and to save the lost. Everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved.

John 9:8-12

The neighbors knew the blind man. He was around for a long time as a beggar and asked them for help. All of a sudden he was no longer begging and he was no longer blind. They were not sure if he was the same man. When the Lord touches a man's life it can have this effect. I know for myself I was completely changed when the Lord saved me. My thoughts, attitudes, and words were completely changed.

Some said he was the same man, others said he was like him, but he said that he was the same man.

They asked him how he was healed and he told them that the Lord Jesus healed him. The crowd was divided over this miracle. Usually when the Lord Jesus entered anyone's life it caused this kind of division. Some were for the man, some were against him, even though as far as he was concerned he

was still the same man. The man who was blind testified that the Lord Jesus healed him. When this man was touched by the Lord Jesus he became a spontaneous evangelist. However, the man didn't know where the Lord Jesus was at.

A supernatural healing got attention. Men were divided into two groups by this event (believers and unbelievers). When the Lord Jesus touched the man he told others who healed him.

When someone is truly saved, healed, or delivered by the Lord Jesus he will naturally tell others his testimony. Our testimony will cause some to want to know where they can also find Jesus. Unfortunately, in this man's case, he did not know where Jesus was and could not lead them to Jesus either.

How can we apply this in our lives? Be prepared when you share your testimony and the gospel. Not everyone will believe you. The truth divides men into two camps (believers and unbelievers).

With the gospel there is no room for neutrality. Men reject or accept the truth depending on where they are themselves. Don't take it personal. Be faithful to share the simple truth of God's word with others and share what God has done in your life. A testimony is a powerful tool to reach others for the Lord Jesus. When you share your testimony be prepared to lead others to Jesus. Know how to go into the Bible and share scriptures which provides them with a basic outline on how to be saved. A good method I've found is the Romans Road plan. Another plan is the ABC plan of salvation.

- Admit you are a sinner (Romans 3:23)

- Believe in the Lord Jesus (his death, burial, and resurrection) Romans 10:9-13

- Call upon his name Romans 10:13

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 outlines the gospel. According to the scriptures, Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures.

John 9:13-23

Why did the people bring the healed man to the religious leaders? No doubt this healing caused a stir. Maybe some people were afraid. They did not understand what happened. They needed official guidance on the situation. This is common in human nature. When people are afraid or do not understand something they tend to look to political or religious leaders for guidance.

Why was there a point made about this happening on the Sabbath? I think the Lord Jesus purposely healed people on the Sabbath day to confront the false religious system. The Lord maximized his time by doing things on certain days and used certain methods to produce this type of effect, not only on the person who benefited, but also as a witness to everyone in Israel. The Lord Jesus created a testimony to all those from the leadership all the way down to the common man who stood by observing. The Lord's work maximized his environment in such a way to reach many people with the truth. He forced people to make a decision about who they believed he was. Notice how quickly this conversation turned into an attempt at determining who the Lord Jesus was.

The religious leaders gave the appearance of due diligence when they investigated the miracle. However, as we learn, their opinion about the Lord Jesus was already decided. They agreed that anyone who confessed the Lord Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. Their mind was made up. This investigation was all for show.

Notice that when the Lord Jesus intervened in a man's life it divided people into two camps - believers and unbelievers. Ironically the unbelievers in this account were those who pretended to be religious and justified their unbelief on religious grounds.

The man who was healed had no problem believing the Lord Jesus was a prophet. Later, he would come to the full knowledge that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God.

Why did the religious leaders bring the parents into the conversation? Perhaps they thought they could use the parents to discredit the son. Perhaps the parents would confirm what they guessed. They guessed the man was really not born blind and the parents would confirm this, and that would be the end of it. However, bringing in the parents just confirmed the basic facts of the story. The man was their son. The man was born blind. The parents would not put themselves in danger by confessing that the Lord Jesus was a prophet or the Messiah. They knew the religious leaders already had their mind made up.

It is interesting that in an atmosphere of unbelief, and aggressive denial of basic facts, that the truth was so clearly and plainly proclaimed by common, simple people like this blind man and his parents. No matter how the religious leaders tried to change the narrative they could not change the facts. The truth will always prevail, no matter what men agree to tell themselves.

Proverbs 16:5, *"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."*

No matter what agreements political and religious leaders made the Lord will still sit upon his throne and rule this world. The Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. No one will stop him from returning and judging this world. The earth is the Lord's and everyone who lives on it. The Lord is returning. Are you ready?

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

John 9:24-34

The Lord Jesus healed the man and now he had a chance to testify in front of the religious leaders in his community. The religious leaders attempted to stamp out the man's testimony but instead provided the man whom the Lord Jesus healed a platform upon which to share his testimony and proclaim the good news.

The religious leaders already made up their mind about the Lord Jesus. They were not interviewing this man because they were interested in the truth. They thought they already had the truth. This was a mistake made because of human arrogance and pride. Never assume you are in the right. Always assume you cannot see everything and investigate facts carefully. These leaders were not interested in truth, though. They brought this man before them for this interrogation because they were confident they would put him in his place. Their agreement with lies was already made.

The man shared what he knew. He was blind, but now he could see. The Lord Jesus healed him. This was a simple story with facts and truth which were obvious for anyone to see.

They asked him the same questions again. This was a strategy to confuse him during the interrogation. They tried to get him to contradict himself or tell a different story.

The man was simple and logical. He already told them the truth once. Why did they want him to tell the story again? Now, we see some holy, common man sarcasm (which I appreciate). He asked them if they wanted to be his disciples. This simple man could see now the deceit in the religious leaders. The truth was so plain and obvious for anyone to see that he recognized the only reason they couldn't understand him was because they were deceitful. They were phony. They were pretenders.

The religious leaders said they were disciples of Moses but they lied. If they believed Moses they would have believed the Lord Jesus because Moses told them about "The Prophet" (Jesus) who would come. They did not believe in Moses, and they did not believe in Jesus. They were of their father the devil, the father of lies and deceit.

The man used rational logic and pointed out the obvious to the religious leaders. If the Lord Jesus was a sinner then he could not have healed him. Obviously, he must be from God, because he healed the man. Rational, logical. The weight of truth was on the side of the man who was healed. But the religious leaders did not want to hear truth so they threw him out. They cast him out.

Notice the final words of the religious leaders: "thou wast altogether born in sins". Why did they say this? They were actually acknowledging when they said this that they really knew the man was born blind. They testified against themselves when they said this. But now the man could see.

Notice how people who take the side of the devil always point to a man's past and try to bring up the past even though this man's past life of blindness was clearly behind him now.

He had a new life now. A new life in Jesus. Old things passed away. All things were new for this man. They did him a favor by throwing him out of their church. New wine cannot be contained by old wine skins.

John 9:35-41

The man who was blind did not know where the Lord Jesus was at. However, the Lord knew where he was. The Lord kept tabs on the man. He heard he was thrown out of the synagogue. The Lord Jesus asked him a question. Do you believe in the Son of God? The man honestly did not know who the Lord Jesus was but was ready to believe anything the Lord Jesus told him because he knew Jesus was from God. He was convinced of the plain facts before him. There was nothing complicated about his faith. He readily believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and worshiped the Lord.

Notice the Lord allowed the man to worship. In the Bible angels always stop people from worshiping them. Peter would not let people worship him. Paul would not let people think he was a god. But the Lord Jesus allowed this man to worship him. What does this tell us? It tells us that Jesus Christ is God. He is God in the flesh. He is the God Man.

The Lord Jesus said he came into the world for "judgment", so that the blind could see and those who could see would become blind. What did he mean by this? This echoed **Isaiah 6:9-10**, and was quoted often in the New Testament. A simple interpretation was that men have their own opinions which they think are as valid as God's word. As a result they won't readily hear, believe, and receive God's word. They think they already "see" and so when they hear God's word and reject it they are "blinded". In this way, for some people, God's word gives sight. For others, it makes them blind. It depends upon the heart condition of the man who hears God's word. This was exactly the same thing we saw in the parable the Lord Jesus told about the sower and the seed. It depends on the man's heart condition how he heard God's word.

The religious people thought they had the "truth" and so they would not listen to Jesus. The Lord's appearance confirmed men in their blindness because when they rejected him they were automatically putting themselves into the kingdom of darkness where they would be blind forever. This helps us, also, to understand how the Bible says Pharaoh hardened his heart, and then the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Whatever condition your heart is in when the Lord shows up that is where you will be from then on. You won't be able to change your position after the Lord shows up. This gives us some insight on the great delusion that will happen in the last days. People don't believe even in the face of angels flying through the air proclaiming the gospel. It is a supernatural hardening of the hearts of men who already chose not to believe in God.

Don't harden your heart. Chose right now, while you still have time, to humble yourself, to repent, and to believe God's word. Believe the gospel. Put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. Today is the day of salvation. You may not have tomorrow.

John Chapter 10

John 10:1-9

The Lord Jesus taught with a parable about a door and sheep. These were metaphors that people could easily understand. The Lord sometimes used this style of teaching to communicate truth to people. Some people just heard a nice story, but others pressed on to ask Jesus the spiritual truth within his parables. In this way only those who truly wanted to know the truth would find it and be held accountable for the truth they uncovered.

In these verses the Lord Jesus identified himself as the "door". The Lord Jesus was the door for the sheep to enter in.

Anyone who attempted to take the place of the Lord Jesus as another doorway to God was a thief and a robber.

Every religion, philosophy or man-made system of ethics or self-help are created by thieves and robbers to lead us away from the true God. It is only through Christ Jesus alone we can know the one true God and receive eternal life. All other doors of salvation, or self-edification, or self-help as men call their systems, lead further and further away from God. False religion is bad enough, but today we have systems which directly promote self worship and quickly corrupt people spiritually. These programs harden their hearts against the gospel of Jesus Christ.

True sheep only follow the voice of the shepherd. Those who belong to the Lord Jesus will hear him, listen to him, and obey him. This goes back to an earlier statement the Lord Jesus made that those who are of God hear God's words, and those who are not of God do not hear God's words. True sheep flee from "strangers". These include motivational speakers, self-help gurus, false preachers, teachers, or spiritual leaders who promote another gospel, another Jesus, or another spirit. They do not promote solid Bible proclamation of Jesus Christ but instead promote a man-made system, whether that system is a religious system of theology, or a system of philosophy, or some other type of system of steps to improve self or enlighten self. All of these false gospels, religions, and philosophies are soundly rejected by a true born again Christian. The sheep recognize this is the voice of the stranger (the devil) and flee from it. Christians do not willingly subject themselves to false spirituality or self worship.

Jesus made it clear that he was the door to God and if anyone entered through him they were saved, could go in and out, and found pasture. This meant those who put their faith in Jesus were saved, will live for eternity, and were always provided for by God.

These scriptures deal with the problem of the enemy bringing in false gospels, doctrines, teachers, prophets, or messiahs. The Lord Jesus warned in **Matthew 24** about deception in the last days. A lot of John's writings deal with last days deception including **1-3 John** and **Revelation**. These writings deal with deception and warn the church about deception and deceivers in the last days. John's writing deal with discerning between true and false Christians and true and false Christianity.

How can we apply this? We need to stay in God's word, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our protection in the last days. Man-made systems of theology will not save us or protect us. Only the Lord Jesus, the doorway to God, can save, and preserve, protect, and provide for us. We must love the truth (Jesus), and cling tightly to him.

John 10:10

The Lord Jesus described the devil (Satan, Lucifer, Serpent, Dragon, father of lies, prince of the power of air) in this verse. The devil is a thief. He came to steal, kill, and destroy. You can tell the people who are on the devil's side. They are thieves: they steal, kill, and destroy.

This is one of those verses I think should be memorized and kept close. We should remind ourselves the enemy is the one who steals and kills and destroys. The Lord Jesus gives us life and that we may have it more abundantly.

What does it mean to have life? Some people mistakenly think this is the "good" life as defined by the world system. Abundant life is not what the world defines as abundant. A man can have very little materially and yet still have abundant life. So what is abundant life? It is eternal life. It is the Holy Spirit living within the born again Christian. The Holy Spirit gives life to the Christian. This life is abundant because it never ends. It lasts forever. This is life that is not stopped by death. Nothing can hinder this abundant life. It comes from God. It is life that will conquer death. It is abundant life that wells up inside of a believer and enables him to love others, and forgive, and live at peace with people. It is life which produces the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is listed for us in **Galatians 5:22-23**, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

Abundant life reminds us that we do not live for this temporary existence on earth. Instead, we live for the kingdom of God which lasts forever and ever. Our life is not built on the sinking sand of this world system, but is instead built on the solid foundation of the eternal city of God, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. We are citizens of another world that will endure forever.

Abundant life does not allow us to settle for this transient life here on the planet. Instead, it causes us to yearn to be in our new body where we will never sin again. We will finally be made whole and complete, lacking nothing. We will be holy, and clean, and pure, and will never be defiled again by this world, or by the devil, or by our own fallen nature. Oh, I look forward to that great day. I look forward to being with the Lord forever. Amen, hallelujah.

John 10:11-18

The Lord Jesus described himself as "the good shepherd". What does a good shepherd do for the sheep? He provides for them. He protects them. He lays down his life for the sheep. This reminds me of how King David laid down his life for his sheep when he was a boy. He would fight against the lion and the bear, so when it came time to fight the giant Goliath he was not afraid. He knew that God would help him. The Lord Jesus was willing to lay down his life for his sheep. He knew that his Father was with him.

The Lord Jesus made a contrast between a true shepherd and something else called a "hireling". This was someone hired to take care of sheep but did not really care about the sheep. If a real emergency happened with a predator they would run. They had no courage to face opposition or threats. They would not face an enemy. They ran away.

Hirelings might be pastors who only serve a church as long as the numbers are up and they are getting enough money in their pay check. Or, they could be pastors who won't leave over money but will not warn their sheep about false doctrines, false preachers, or false ministries. Or, they could be pastors who do all of the above but view ministry as a career and are constantly looking for ways to make a name for themselves. All of these ideas characterize hirelings. They are not true shepherds. True shepherds lay down their life. They do not lord themselves over the flock, but live in such a way to be an example to others. They faithfully feed God's word to God's people and warn them to stay away from false doctrine.

The Lord Jesus also had other sheep. When he said this, in the original context, he referred to Gentiles who would come to faith in the Messiah. There would be people, who were not Israel, but would come to believe in Israel's God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

These sheep hear his voice. What does it mean to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus? I believe it starts with the written word of God, and it must always stay within the parameters of God's written word. The Lord does not contradict his written word. I do believe a man can hear the voice of the Lord. I believe this because I experienced God speaking to me, and I know the Lord speaks to people today.

Jesus laid down his life. How can we follow his example and lay down our life for others?

John 10:19-26

Again, we see the Lord Jesus caused division among people. I think it is a mistake to think as Christians that our goal is unity. This will never happen as long as we are under this current world system. The enemy will fabricate a false unity on the planet in order to bring in his man of sin, the Antichrist. The devil will destroy a lot of people while he is talking about peace. However, Jesus doesn't promote false unity or peace. He caused division from the beginning. He divided the day from the night. He divided light from darkness. The word of God discerned all the way down to the joints and marrow and he knew the thoughts and intents of man's heart. (**Hebrews 4:12**)

There is no neutral ground with Jesus. You are for him or you are against him. God is light, and in him there is darkness at all. If you want darkness, then you can't have Jesus. Jesus is all light, and love, and life. There is no lies, no darkness, and no death in Jesus. He is life. Abundant life.

Those who stood against the Lord said outrageous things against him. This shows how out of control and alarmed his opponents were. They were unhinged. They were completely irrational in the statements they made.

Other people were more reasonable and logical. They pointed out the facts. Since Jesus did good works he could not be of the devil. The people believed that the devil could not have given the blind man his sight back. I'm not too sure the devil couldn't do something similar to this, or at least trick people into believing he could heal someone, but here we see they were just using logic. Logic tells us the devil is not going to heal a blind man.

The text pauses here in the middle to let us know what time of the year it was and the geographical location. Why? Because everything in these records is rooted in historical reality. All this literally happened. These are not made-up stories about Jesus. These events literally took place.

The people again challenged the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus already spoke to them. He knew they were like the religious leaders who wanted to continue endlessly questioning the blind man who was healed. Their constant questions did not indicate they had any real interest in faith in Jesus. There was enough evidence already in who Jesus was. They didn't believe because they didn't want to believe in him. Jesus said they were not his sheep.

Jesus said these people did not believe in him because they were not his sheep. What does this reveal? What you can believe is determined by what kind of a person you already are. If you are an evil person and love sin then you will never be able to believe the truth because the truth condemns you. Instead, you reject the truth, because your life is a lie.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. This is written in the scriptures for us so we can believe and be saved. Everyone who will call upon the name of Jesus will be saved.

John 10:27-36

Do people today hear the voice of God? What did Jesus say in the scripture before us? The Lord Jesus said his sheep hear his voice. How literal should this be taken? We know the Lord Jesus used sheep as a metaphor. Was he literal when he said his sheep hear his voice? What does this mean?

I resort to a plain, common man reading of scripture. We don't have to explain this away by using a system of theology in order to remove what the Lord Jesus plainly said here. The Lord Jesus said those who belong to him hear his voice. The Lord Jesus communicated to people in a lot of different ways. Always judge anything you hear by the written word of God. The Lord will not contradict the scripture. He always speaks in agreement with the written word of God. I believe the Lord Jesus speaks to us today. We can hear his voice. I've experienced this in my life and I know God's voice is real. It is unmistakable.

Notice the Lord Jesus said that he knows his sheep. He knows their name. When the Lord spoke to me the first thing he said was my name. He said "Mike". The Lord knows those who are his. He knows their name. He knows everything about us. He knows what we are going to say before we say it. He knows our needs even before we do. He is completely aware of every detail in our lives.

He gives us eternal life. Eternal life is God's life, it is life that lasts forever and never ends. There is no end to the life which God gives those who belong to him. God will never lose anyone who belongs to him. This gives us great assurance of salvation. This encourages us that no matter what we go through we will never be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing can separate us from God's love. (**Romans 8**).

The people wanted to stone the Lord Jesus and accused him of blasphemy. However, the Lord Jesus proved to them from the scripture that they had no scriptural basis for accusing him of blasphemy. He did not say anything which was contrary to what was already written in scripture. He showed them a text in the Bible that could be used as a precedent for a man calling himself a son of God. However, by saying this, the Lord Jesus never minimized or denied that he was unique. He is the unique Son of God, and he is God the Son. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What scripture from the Old Testament did the Lord Jesus quote? What was the original context of that scripture? See if you can research it and find out what the original meaning of those scriptures meant. Put into your own words what the Lord Jesus said and how he applied scripture to himself.

These particular scriptures are twisted by some today who are in cults and preaching false doctrines. Make sure you have a solid understanding of what the Lord Jesus actually said in these verses.

Jesus is coming again. Are you ready?

John 10:37-42

The Lord Jesus asked the people to be rational and logical about him and their accusations against him. He asked them to judge him according to the works he did. His words and actions were in complete agreement. What he said agreed with what he did. He asked them to look at the facts based upon his actions. Judge him by his fruit, in other words.

Instead, they persisted in their goal to destroy him. They refused to believe his words were backed up by his actions. They would not look at facts or evidence of the life of Jesus. Instead, they tried to twist his words so they could have a reason to accuse and kill him.

The Lord Jesus escaped the crowd and returned to the place where John the Baptist was at first. Again, we see the geographical location mentioned. This reminds us that this account was not a made-up story, but was historical events which took place.

People who believed the testimony of John the Baptist believed in the Lord Jesus. They said that even though John the Baptist did no miracle that what he said about the Lord Jesus was true. True believers do not need signs, wonders, or miracles in order to believe. They hear God's word and believe because they belong to God.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus today and be saved.

John Chapter 11

John 11:1-4

This chapter began with the account of Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and Jesus. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. The Lord Jesus had a relationship with this family, and this was the same Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. It was her brother who was sick.

Lazarus was sick with a deadly illness and he died. Before he died Martha and Mary sent a message to the Lord Jesus and requested his help. They believed that the Lord Jesus could heal Lazarus. In their request they described Lazarus as "he whom thou loveth". This shows us there was a deep friendship between this family and the Lord Jesus prior to these events.

The Lord Jesus received the message and told everyone that this sickness would not end in the death of Lazarus. Instead, the situation would bring glory to the Son of God.

Lazarus did die, but he did not stay dead. The Lord spoke his word of resurrection and Lazarus was brought back from the dead.

Is someone dead if the Lord Jesus resurrects them? When we believe in the Lord Jesus we never really die. God defines "death" differently than we do. The Bible does not define the "real" death as physical death but spiritual death. In the spiritual sense, Lazarus never died. His body ceased to function temporarily until the Lord Jesus resurrected his physical body but Lazarus himself, his real soul, never perished.

Before the Lord Jesus received the message from Mary and Martha he knew what would happen. He told everyone that this would not end with the death of Lazarus but instead would result in the glory of the Son of God.

One thought we can glean from this is that sickness, disease, and death are under the control of God. God uses these things to glorify his name. Why? We can't understand everything but we can know that God is good, and that everything he does is for the good of the universe, and also what is good for us. It is good for us at this time to suffer through this world of sorrow, but this will all come to an end one day. We will be raised up to be with the Lord forever. A time will come when death will no longer claim anyone. We will live forever with the Lord Jesus.

Call on the name of the Lord Jesus today so that you can be saved, so that you can go to heaven, and have eternal life. God loves you and it is not his will that any person perish in their sins. Repent and believe the gospel. Jesus Christ is Lord.

John 11:5-16

The Lord Jesus loved the family of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. He had a friendship with them prior to when Lazarus got sick and died. Why did the scripture point out that the Lord Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus? I think this statement was set in contrast to what came next. In the next sentence we read that the Lord Jesus delayed two more days when he received the message. Why? His delay was in the context of his love for this family. He did not delay because he did not love them.

This is a lesson we should remember. God's delay in our life does not mean he does not love us. God loves us. He is never late, remember this. Is death a problem for someone would can speak a word and raise someone from the dead? This delay would not hurt them in the long run but it was necessary. God's delays are necessary for his own purposes.

The disciples did not understand why Jesus wanted to go back to the same place where his life was in danger. Jesus replied by explaining about walking in day light and not at night. What did Jesus mean by this? What was Jesus talking about? One possibility was that sometimes when we "walk in the light" and follow God's will it takes us into dangerous places. Danger or safety is no indication of whether or not we are walking in the light of God's will. Sometimes walking in the daylight of God's will leads us into dangerous places. What other applications can you think of which explain what Jesus said?

Jesus described Lazarus as asleep. He purposely uses the word "sleep". The disciples did not understand and thought he talked about natural sleep. Jesus did not talk about natural sleep but said Lazarus was dead. Jesus used the word "sleep" for death.

Sleep is temporary. You can wake someone up from sleeping. This is the way the Lord views death for the believer. It is a temporary condition which he can bring us out of. The New Testament continued to use the word "sleep" to describe the condition of death for the believer.

Jesus used language the disciples misunderstood because they thought in natural terms. They misunderstood Jesus because Jesus used words in a different context than what they were used to. He said sleep because it was more accurate from the point of view of Jesus than "death" which sounded more permanent than sleep. Everything Jesus said was filled with meaning and life. There were layers of meaning to what Jesus said, just like his parables. Every word of God is active and alive and filled with meaning and purpose.

Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus was dead before they left so that when they arrived and saw it was as Jesus said then they would believe him. Jesus tried to spark faith in their heart through these circumstances. The Son of God would be glorified so that men would believe in God and put their trust in Jesus.

Do you believe in Jesus? Have you trusted in him as your Lord and Savior? Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

John 11:17-27

As a result of the Lord's delay they arrived after Lazarus was in the grave four days. Is four days significant? It proves beyond a shadow of a doubt he was dead. He was not just unconscious. He was decaying in the grave. He was dead beyond any doubt to the people there.

The town of Bethany was mentioned in this scripture. Anytime I see the mention of a place I am reminded that these are not made-up stories, but are literal historical events which took place in our world. These places still exist to this day. You can go right to where this place is located today and stand on the same ground where Jesus walked.

Martha heard Jesus arrived and went to meet him but Mary stayed home. There was a contrast often made between these two sisters. In these verses I am not sure what the contrast implied or symbolized. Martha went out to meet the Lord Jesus and engaged him in conversation right away.

She expressed regret that he did not come sooner but said she believed even now God could use him to help. I'm not sure what she thought he might do at this time. Jesus challenged Martha by telling her what he would do momentarily. Lazarus would rise from the dead. Martha misunderstood and thought he talked about the doctrine of the resurrection at the last day. Jesus was not teaching a Bible doctrine. He was talking about himself and what he would do in a few minutes. Jesus told her that he is the resurrection and life.

What did this mean? Every Bible doctrine is only a sign post pointing to the present greatness and reality of the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us life and life abundantly. He is here now to give us life. He is here to baptize us in the Holy Ghost and give us eternal life.

Acts 2:21. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved.

John 11:28-37

God is never late. The underlying lesson for me in this passage is that God is not late. Everyone here, including Mary, thought that Jesus was too late to do any good. They thought that he was constrained by time and space in the same way in which they were. Since Lazarus was dead then Jesus was too late. But as we shall see later in this chapter the Lord Jesus was never late. His delay was on purpose. His delay allowed time for Lazarus to go to "sleep" so that Jesus could wake him up and thus demonstrate the power of God over death to these people.

Martha told Mary that Jesus asked for her, so she went out quickly to meet the Lord. Other people who were with Mary followed her when she left. Mary fell down at the Lord's feet in grief and confessed that she believed he could have helped her brother if he had been there earlier. She believed in the Lord, but she did not believe the Lord could help her now that Lazarus was dead. He was too late. Notice how hard it was for men to believe in the present greatness of God. They believed in the God of history. They believed in the God of the future. But they had difficulty believing in the God who is here right now, standing before us, looking at our situation, living in this present moment with us. Jesus was so present with them that he was touched by their emotions. He cried when he saw their grief and mourning. He wept with them.

The point I would like to underline in these verses was that Jesus wept with these people. Even though he knew what he was about to do in raising Lazarus from the dead, he still entered their momentary grief and sorrow. The Lord Jesus saw the end from the beginning, and yet he was with them in that moment and felt their emotion. He was touched by the feeling of their emotion.

Don't ever think that God does not care about the smallest detail in your life. Yes, he has a lot to be concerned about in the world. But he is also with you in every thought, in every word, in every emotion in your life. He is an ever present help. He will never leave us or forsake us.

Do you sense the presence of the Lord in your life today? Do you believe he sees what you are going through? Turn to the Lord with all of your heart. Humble yourself under his mighty hand. Cast all your cares upon him, because he cares for you.

John 11:38-46

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was an event Jesus led up to since he first heard the news Lazarus was sick and told his disciples that he would wake him up. Lazarus was dead four days and Martha reminded the Lord that the corpse was now stinking from rot.

Jesus told them to take away the stone. Despite Martha's protest he persisted in his plan. No doubt these people had no idea what Jesus would do but they obeyed him anyway.

This is a good point to remember. Even if you do not understand what the Lord is doing just keep on obeying him. Do what he says.

Jesus told them if they believed they would see the glory of God. It was only by putting our faith in the Lord that we can truly "see" the works of the Lord. If we do not have faith in God even if we see someone raised from the dead we won't believe it. We won't believe the facts right in front of us. This is what we see here. Some of the people still did not believe in Jesus and went to report on him to the religious leaders.

Jesus prayed to Father God. He prayed out loud so people could hear his relationship with God. Jesus prayed so they would see what happened next was God's plan. It was God's plan to bring glory to Jesus and show people that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

At the word of Jesus the dead man rose from the grave. Jesus resurrected Lazarus. This resurrection involved a man's spirit returning to the body, and that body restored from a state of decay to life. This was a miracle on many levels. It was the resurrection power of God. Jesus gives life! He speaks and we have life. His word gives us spiritual life, and his word raises us up from the dead.

Jesus told the people to help Lazarus out of the grave clothes. Jesus gave him life. People were expected to help the man get out of the grave clothes.

We will all die one day. The question is when you leave your body will your spirit return to God or will you be separated from God forever? To be separated from God forever is a death which is a permanent state of separation from God. Instead, put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for your sins and mine. Receive the forgiveness God offers through his son Jesus. Put your faith in Jesus. Call upon his name so that you can be saved and have eternal life instead of eternal death.

John 11:47-57

Here we see the religious leaders got organized in their opposition against Jesus. Until now the attacks on Jesus were somewhat random and spontaneous, but now they purposely organized together to put Jesus down. What were they alarmed about all of a sudden? Because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This miracle raised the bar and the religious leaders were now afraid of the Lord Jesus. They were afraid he would take away their power, position, and prestige. They were afraid he would destroy the nation of Israel. Ironically, by their rejection of the Lord Jesus, they made it certain they would all lose their positions and that the Romans would dismantle Jerusalem and the nation of Israel.

The religious leaders were smart enough to understand the stakes were high but chose to do the one thing which made their doom certain. Jesus was their only hope, and by rejecting him, they put the final nail in their own coffin.

Strangely, during this meeting the high priest said that Jesus must die to save the nation of Israel. Even though he meant one thing those who heard him realized he prophesied. He was, after all, in the seat of the nations' leader, and as such, was used by God to say what would happen. However, we know what this man meant when he said this was different from how it was interpreted as prophecy. This is an example of how original context or intent has little to do with how scripture interprets itself.

How is it possible this evil man spoke the truth? This reminds me of how God used Balaam to speak the truth. Also, speaking of Balaam, God used Balaam's donkey to speak. God can use anything to communicate in any way he chooses.

Jesus not only died for Israel but for all people scattered throughout the nations. This points forward to how the gospel went to every nation and many Gentiles believed in the Messiah.

From this point, the religious leaders were determined to kill Jesus. For them, it was only a matter of opportunity. They put out a hit on the Lord. Basically they hung out a wanted poster for Jesus.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. All who call upon the name of Jesus will be saved. **Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13**

John Chapter 12

John 12:1-8

This specific time frame of "six days" reminds us these events were historical. We have specific times mentioned in the text. A reminder that the Bible recorded historical events which literally happened.

Jesus had a meal with his friends. His friend Mary expressed her worship by anointing Jesus with an expensive ointment. This act of love and worship was protested by the traitor Judas Iscariot. This traitor covered up his hard heart by pretending to care about poor people. What does this remind you of? This passage revealed to us that Judas was actually a thief and helped himself to the money in the bag. Jesus responded to Judas with a rebuke and warning him to leave her alone. Jesus said that she did this to prepare for his burial. These words must have been the final straw for Judas because not long after this he made arrangements with the religious leaders to betray Jesus.

What can we learn from these verses? True devotion to Jesus does not consider the personal price or sacrifice or the monetary value of the sacrifice. Worshiping the Lord does not consider the price. The Lord taught us to count the cost. Whatever price we think we pay does not compare to the price which Jesus paid upon the cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus is worthy of any sacrifice which we make in his name.

True love for Jesus inspired people to sacrificial surrender of their lives, resources, possessions, whatever they had. They surrendered it all to Jesus.

Does this mean we give our money to every good cause that comes along? Surely Judas represented a good cause. What better cause is there than giving to the poor? But Jesus knew the cause of Judas was a fake cause. There are churches and ministries who take the money of Christians for fake causes like Judas. They pretend to care about people, but really they just want your money. We must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Another thought here was that Judas was one of the 12 disciples and yet he was a thief. There are people who can convince you by their appearance and words they are Christians but inwardly they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus warned us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. We should always be listening to the Holy Spirit and pay attention when the Holy Spirit warns us about someone. Not everyone who talks about God is really a believer. Not everyone who professes the Lord Jesus is known by him. Many will say in the last day "Lord, Lord" but the Lord does not know them. They are workers of lawlessness.

Remember there will always be tares among the wheat. Until Jesus comes back churches will always be filled with false brethren.

Jesus told them he would soon die. He clearly let them know what was about to happen to him but they did not believe what Jesus said to them. They did not believe or understand that Christ must suffer these things, and die on a cross for our sins, and be buried, and rise again on the third day.

John 12:9-19

People not only wanted to see Jesus but also Lazarus. Why were people interested in Lazarus? Because he was dead and came back. He was a good example of the fascination with near death experiences. A lot of people were curious about the other side. Was this a morbid curiosity? Whatever the motivation the crowd thronged them. The religious leaders watched all of this and were alarmed.

The religious leaders wanted to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. Why? Because he was popular. Anyone who attracted a crowd was a threat to the religious leaders. They were afraid of losing followers. This gives us a clue on how man-made religious systems work. It operates on the principles of men making a name for themselves (or their "ministries", or their "churches"), and then bringing large numbers of people under their system. So, basically the pride of life works in these systems to bring about carnal power, provision, and protection. This system results in men worshiping self, or their organization. It might start as an attempt to honor God but as time wears on the spiritual laws at work in these systems turn men to pride and self-worship. This is how the world system operates. It is inevitable.

Therefore, when the religious leaders saw crowds following Jesus and Lazarus they were immediately threatened by this.

These verses give us a description of the entry Jesus made into Jerusalem. This was the prophesied entry into Jerusalem of the Messiah King. Knowing, or unknowingly, the crowds fulfilled prophecy by crying out to the King as he entered into Jerusalem on a donkey.

At that time the disciples did not discern these events were the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Only later did they understand how these events were the fulfillment of the prophets. What Bible prophecies are being fulfilled today?

The religious leaders were alarmed at the crowd following Jesus. Again, this was because of numbers. More numbers for Jesus meant less numbers for them. They were afraid of Jesus because of his popularity.

The religious system made by man is based on the reputation of men. This is why the scriptures say they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Their system was man-made and depended on men supporting them. It was a system that could run completely independent of God, even though they gave lip service to God.

Today is the day of salvation. Turn to God in humility and put your faith in the Lord Jesus before it is too late. You do not know what a day may bring forth. Seize this moment right now to make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior.

John 12:20-26

Greeks looked for Jesus. We were not told why they looked for Jesus. Their purpose in approaching Jesus was urgent enough that the disciples of Jesus were willing to help them. They approached Philip first, and then Philip went to Andrew. Both disciples approached Jesus to give him the request of the Gentiles. On first glance it might seem Jesus did not reply to their request, but he did.

Why does the Bible include examples of Gentiles who approached Jesus or requested help from Jesus? It pointed ahead to a time when the Gentiles would be grafted into the tree of Israel. Israel is the root, and Gentiles were grafted into this tree by faith in the Messiah. However, while he was in his earthly body the Lord could only reach so many people at one time. He had a certain amount of time to fulfill his Father's will on earth. During his earthly ministry Jesus focused primarily on Israel and his 12 disciples. However, he did minister to Gentiles at times, for those who had the faith to touch him, and those who persisted in reaching him like these Greeks.

What did Jesus mean when he spoke about a corn of wheat falling into the ground? This is a word picture, in the same way that Paul used word pictures in 1 Corinthians 15 to describe resurrection. Before resurrection we have to die. A seed cannot bear fruit until it first goes into the ground and dies. And then the life within the seed comes up in resurrection to bring forth new life. Jesus looked ahead to his death, burial, and resurrection. He knew he could only reach so many people in his earthly body, but after his death, burial, and resurrection the gospel would go to every nation in the world. When Jesus talked about a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying he talked about himself. The only way he could reach all the Gentiles who pressed in to see him was for him to die and be raised from the dead. Then, he would send the Holy Spirit and everyone would have an opportunity to be saved.

Death and resurrection are fundamental principles in the Christian life. In order for a disciple of the Lord Jesus to inherit eternal life he must be willing to let go of his own life. We have to surrender our life to Jesus Christ. I've heard this many times from preachers but one day it hit me personally. We literally have to surrender our lives. We have to let go. We cannot have control of our own lives. We must surrender. This surrendering to Jesus means we deny ourselves. We no longer live the way we think best, but instead we ask Jesus how he wants us to live each day. We read the Bible not just for information, but so we can learn what the Holy Spirit wants us to do that day.

We cannot love self and love Jesus at the same time. We must be willing to completely let go and abandon self so we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we have eternal life. He who has the Son of God has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must be born again by the Holy Spirit. Many people have religion and Bible doctrines, but they are not born again. They do not have the Holy Spirit living in them. They want to hold onto their own lives and pretend to be religious (for their own motives, like Judas Iscariot).

Finally, if we live for Jesus and abandon self, then the Father will honor us. What does that look like? We don't know yet, but for starters we will live forever with the Lord, and will have a new body. We will be given a resurrection body like the Lord's, and we will live with him forever.

John 12:27-36

Jesus said his soul was troubled. This is similar to what happened later in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested. His soul was troubled. We cannot understand the depth of what this trouble was for the Lord. In his humanity did he dread his own death? Probably, but it was more to it, because he would not have a peaceful death, but one in public before others who mocked him. He also bore our sins upon himself, and we cannot imagine now the full depth of that pain upon his spirit and soul and body.

Jesus asked a question. What shall I say? Should he ask his Father to save him from this hour? He would later in the Garden face this question again. But he reminded himself right away that it was for this purpose he came into the world. His goal was to offer himself as the Lamb of God, a sacrificial substitute for the sins of the world. He would die a death he did not deserve to save men who did deserve to die in this manner. He took our place.

He prayed to God the Father in heaven and received a reply. A voice spoke from heaven, in the same way as the voice of the Father spoke when he was baptized and when he was transfigured. Men heard the voice, but explained it away, as men do when they are confronted with God. Men explain away God as if they know better than to give in to faith in God. The fool has said in his heart there is no God. (**Psalms 14:1**)

Jesus called the devil "the prince of this world" and plainly declared that what he would accomplish through his death, burial, and resurrection would completely cast out the devil. **1 John 3:8**, "...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"Lifted up" points to the crucifixion upon the cross. Jesus knew the type of death he would die. He knew what would happen before it happened, and many times told people what would happen. He told them ahead of time so that when it did happen they would believe in him.

These people who questioned him were unbelievers. They still tried to trick him into contradicting himself with scripture. They tried to expose him as being inconsistent with scripture, but they were the ones who did not know the scriptures. They believed they had superior knowledge of the Bible than the Word of God himself.

Jesus replied to their ignorance when he told them that the light would only be with them a little while. This pointed to the fact that there was a window of time for salvation. Today is the day of salvation. The window of time for their salvation was fast closing. He exhorted them to believe in him while they still had time before they were confirmed in the darkness of unbelief and separation from the living God.

Jesus hid from them. This showed the crowd was a threat to him. They were irritated enough to do him harm if they could, but it was not yet his time.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. All who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

John 12:37-43

When Jesus told the parable about the rich man in hell and Lazarus (who went to paradise) Abraham was quoted and said that if people did not believe the Bible they would not believe even if someone rose from the dead. What greater miracle could men see than someone rising from the dead? Yet we know the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and still men did not believe in God.

Jesus did many miracles during his ministry but people still refused to believe he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. They did not believe in him. I've often said that the number one thing that stops people from believing the facts right in front of them is that they have already agreed to a belief, or presupposition, previous to the current incident or situation. As a result of this previous agreement their minds are unable to process anything happening now which contradicts what they believed previously. In other words, if people already have decided they do not believe in God then miracles will not convince them either. The religious leaders already agreed Jesus was not their Messiah. It did not matter what he did or said, they would never accept him.

This was what the prophet Isaiah said would happen. Isaiah lived hundreds of years before the events which took place in the New Testament. Yet he saw all of this ahead of time. He said people would not believe in the Messiah. They would be blind and unable to hear him, unable to believe in him. Because of their previous agreement with a bad interpretation of scripture they were unable to let go of their pride. They would not relinquish their positions. However, there were some who did believe.

The few religious leaders who did believe in Jesus did not share this publicly. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

What does "praise of men" mean? It is a system of life which most people live in and never consider. It is a man-centered system of life where provision, protection, and portion in life are a result of self-

worship and the worship of other men. It a lifestyle independent of God. It is a life principle of a man-made system independent of God. Most people live like this. They have no concept of what living according to faith means.

Living according to the "praise of God" means living according to a heavenly principle of life. This is the kind of life which we see Jesus lived. He did not rely upon any system or any man for his provision, or protection, or portion. He was in total reliance upon his heavenly Father for everything in life.

It is difficult for people who have position in the world to let go of it. They are convinced their life depends upon their reputation, the name they make for themselves, and upon the system they are part of. However, God went to great lengths in the Bible to teach men that we do not live by bread alone. We do not depend upon the world system for life. We depend upon God. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." This is living in dependence upon God.

Those who live according to the pride of life love the praise of men. What does this mean? It means the more numbers of men you have underneath you, the more followers, the more provision and protection you have. However, this is an illusion. It is the way the world thinks. God can take away those numbers over night and prove to men that their provision and protection does not come from men, or from a man-made system, but from God above.

John 12:44-50

This passage underlined for me the fact that Jesus is God. He made it clear that he spoke the words of his Father. His Father is God. Jesus and his Father are one. God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These agree in one. God is three persons, and yet one God. Hard to wrap our human minds around this, but it is the revelation of who God is.

These verses underline the importance of not only hearing God's word but also believing God's word. If anyone hears God's word and does not believe he will eventually face judgment. We are responsible and held accountable for believing God's word when we hear it.

How can I apply this to my life? Be careful to believe God's word. As humans we will not always understand everything that God speaks. How could we? But we are held accountable for having faith in God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. We must have faith in God and trust in him. To choose unbelief over faith is to call God a liar. We will be held accountable for unbelief. We will be held accountable to God if we do not believe in his word.

Jesus is the light. If we do not believe in Jesus and his word then we will live in darkness. When you leave your physical body you will no longer enjoy the light of the sun, moon, or stars, and the spiritual darkness you lived in on earth will become your permanent home in eternity. I cannot comprehend why anyone would choose darkness over light.

Lord, shine your light on me. Do whatever it takes to keep me in the light. Do whatever is necessary to keep me abiding in the light of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

John Chapter 13

John 13:1-5

We have a specific time frame for events. This happened before the feast of Passover. Passover is a key word in this because as we will see the Lord Jesus is the Passover lamb which was sacrificed, not only for Israel, but also for the sins of the whole world. This scripture provided a time frame but did not tell us the location of where Jesus and his disciples were. Perhaps the reason for this was because the location was hidden by the Lord since there was a traitor in their midst. The Lord did not want to allow Judas to betray him too early before this last supper with his disciples.

Jesus did everything according to God's schedule and timetable. There was a season and a time for everything in the Lord's life. Now was the time for him to prepare his disciples for his imminent death, burial, and resurrection.

In this intimate scene between the Lord and his disciples the devil was mentioned. A traitor was in their midst. Here the love of God was in start contrast to the hatred and betrayal of Satan.

Jesus came from God and was returning to God. He came to give his life as the sacrificial lamb for our sins. This was the symbol of the Passover meal, the sacrificial lamb. Jesus came from God as the lamb. He was returning to God after his resurrection in order to fulfill his role as our high priest forever. He lives forever making intercession for us now.

Jesus demonstrates his love and humility by washing the feet of his disciples. In that time and culture only house servants and slaves washed the feet of people. Jesus was taking the role of a slave or a servant when he washed his disciples feet.

God became a man. He was born in a stable, grew up in a remote village, was rejected by his neighbors and family, persecuted by the religious and political leaders, and ultimately died on the cross. What kind of life did Jesus live? It as a life of humility. He demonstrated the heart of God in the life which he chose to live. Love and humility. This is the heart of God. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Jesus did all of this because of his great love for us.

John 13:6-17

Why did Simon Peter have this reaction to the Lord? He did not like to see his Lord acting like that. He did not want the Lord to wash his feet. Remember, this kind of work was done by household servants and slaves.

Here Jesus took the role of a servant and washed his disciples' feet. Peter did not like this at all. He thought the Lord should have people waiting on him instead of serving others.

Peter's mindset was still controlled by the attitude of the world. People in the world do not think leaders should be humble like this. A leader should be proud and have other people wait on them and not like how Jesus acted. The Lord demonstrated something that was completely foreign to the mindset of these men. They never saw any religious leader act like this.

True spiritual authority is not like the authority in the world system. True spiritual authority is not afraid of humility.

World system authority is built on the foundation of pride. Men who lead in the world stand upon the pride of life. They exalt their own names. They make a name for themselves. Their reputation is their life. They do not humble themselves or admit they are wrong or bend down to wash someone's feet.

However, the Lord Jesus, who is God himself in the flesh, knelt down and washed the feet of these men. What kind of God is this?

He is the creator of all things. He is love. He is light. He humbled himself and came into the world as a baby laid in a manger. He announced his birth to outcast shepherds. He lived in a remote village. He was misunderstood, maligned, persecuted, and his closest friends did not comprehend his mission or purpose.

If we do not allow the Lord to do his work in us then we have no part in him. We must trust in the Lord to make us righteous and clean. We are not able to wash ourselves spiritually. The Lord must cleanse us. We cannot cleanse ourselves. Jesus cleansed us through his death, burial, and resurrection. He continues to cleanse us by the Holy Spirit applying the finished work of Christ to our lives. The Holy Spirit applies God's word to our every day lives. This is how we are made clean and kept clean by the Lord.

Jesus washed his disciples feet to give them an example of humility and serving one another. He said they were not greater than their master, and so they must also do the same. We must love one another and serve one another. Let each one of us esteem other people better than ourselves. Do not think of ourselves more highly than we ought but rather with sober judgment. We are not better than any one else. We all need one another.

Jesus washed his disciples feet. Let us now wash the feet of our brother as well. Amen.

John 13:18-30

Jesus told his disciples ahead of time that he was betrayed by one of the disciples who were present. No one had a clue Judas Iscariot was a traitor, but the Lord Jesus knew it. He knew Judas would betray him to the religious rulers. Jesus revealed what would happen before it happened so that when it happened they would believe him.

This is the reason we have Bible prophecy. God tells us ahead of time what will happen so when it happens we will believe in God. Prophecy in the Bible is so specific that if anyone pays attention at all they can know it is God.

When I look around today at current events I know Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. There are wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and pestilences all happening at this moment. I know end times Bible prophecy is being fulfilled right in front of our eyes.

Jesus was troubled when he revealed there was a traitor. It breaks God's heart to know some will fall away. There are people who betray the Lord and turn their back on their profession of faith. Even

though God knows these people and what they will do it still breaks his heart to see people turn their back on him. May the Lord help us to stay in his word, stay in prayer, and stay humble. It is only by God's grace and his Holy Spirit that we are kept from the evil of our present time.

When the Lord Jesus revealed there was a traitor in the camp Simon Peter went to work to flush out the traitor. What was Peter thinking? Did Peter think he could take care of this traitor himself? Did he think he would get some straightening going on? Peter appeared to think he could handle the situation. Peter asked John to ask Jesus who was the traitor.

Jesus revealed who the traitor was by dipping a piece of bread and then handing the bread to Judas. When Judas received the bread Satan entered him. When Jesus did this he was handing Judas over. Up until that moment, even though Judas was a traitor in his heart, the Lord protected him. But at that moment the Lord Jesus removed his protection from Judas and Satan took him over completely.

This is a warning to us. Be careful to guard your heart. (**Proverbs 4:23**). If you persist in disobedience, unbelief, stubbornness, then at some point you will cross a line with the Lord. (**Proverbs 29:1**).

May God help me to have a humble heart and walk in the fear of the Lord always. May God help me to always have sober judgment of myself and never trust myself, but always rely upon God's grace and the Holy Spirit.

All of this transpired in front of the disciples but no one knew it or realized what happened. Verse 30 said Judas went immediately out and it was night. That night was literal and spiritual. Judas left the light of Jesus and went out into the night of spiritual darkness. He chose the side of the devil and now could no longer come back. He was doomed.

May the Lord search our hearts and deliver us from any thought, or attitude that would lead us to becoming a traitor to the Lord. May the Holy Spirit shine his light upon our hearts and help us to walk in truth, in the light, in love, in the Holy Spirit. May the Lord chasten us, correct us, rebuke us, reprove us, and do whatever is necessary to keep us close to him and walking in the light of the truth.

Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. There is no other way to know God except through Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6**) There is no other name given under heaven whereby men must be saved. (**Acts 4:12**) Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. (**Acts 2:21**)

John 13:31-38

After Judas left Jesus announced the Son of man was glorified. When Judas left it set in motion the final series of events that led to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This was why he said the Son of man was glorified. The culmination of his life's work on earth was coming to fulfillment. He would shortly complete the work which God gave him to accomplish on earth.

He told his disciples that where he was about to go they would not be able to follow. Why did he tell them this? Perhaps to give them comfort when they all ran away at his arrest? Jesus knew they could not walk this road to Calvary with him. He comforted them ahead of time and let them know they could not endure what he would go through by himself.

Jesus taught his disciples to love one another. This was one of the greatest ways to reach the world. When Christians love one another it shows the world that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ. I remember I experienced this when I was a young Christian. I lived in a Christian community and people truly did love one another. It was only for a short period of time in my life but I won't ever forget it. It was just a taste of how the true church lives.

Peter was confused as to why he could not follow the Lord. He professed he would follow the Lord anywhere even if it led to death. But Peter did not really know himself very well. The Lord knew Peter better than he did. The Lord told Peter that he would deny Jesus. The Lord already knew what each disciple would do before they did it. This shows us how much God knows us. He loves us, and he knows everything about us.

My take away from this chapter is where Jesus told us to love another. This is our greatest tool in evangelism. Love one another.

John Chapter 14

John 14:1-4

The Lord shared disturbing information about a traitor in their midst. He told them about his death on the cross for a while. They didn't understand everything Jesus said but they felt the gravity of his words.

The Lord encouraged them in the midst of the darkness. Surrounded by enemies and threats the Lord exhorted them to not allow their hearts to be troubled. This is a word we really need to hear in our world today. We are surrounded by threats and uncertainty on every side, and yet I believe God is telling us this same message today, "Let not your heart be troubled." The Lord speaks this to his children, for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior: don't let your heart be troubled.

There is a proverb I am reminded of here. *"Be not afraid of sudden fear; neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."* (**Proverbs 3:25-26**)

Jesus pointed them to a sure future where hope would not be disappointed. The Lord did not say they would not endure suffering in this life, but pointed them to the real hope in heaven. Jesus told them in his Father's house are many mansions. We cannot begin to imagine now what those mansions are like. What will that house be like? We cannot yet understand the home which God has made for us in eternity. The Lord encouraged us to look beyond this temporary life on earth to our real life in eternity with our heavenly Father.

Jesus made a promise that he would return. After his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension there would be another time in which he would return. The apostle Paul mentioned this "day of the Lord" often in his letters. He looked forward to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. The Lord will return for his people. He returns to his people. His plans for us are good and they are to give us a future and a hope.

These verses are some of the most precious promises I can think of in the Bible. Jesus went away in order to prepare a home for us and he will return to receive us back to himself. Where he is we will be also. We will live forever with the Lord. I look forward to this. I look forward to living with the Lord forever.

John 14:5-11

Jesus told his disciples he would die on the cross, be buried, and rise again on the third day. After his resurrection he would ascend back up to his Father in heaven and send the Holy Spirit to them. Jesus told them he would go away to prepare a place for them and would come back to receive them to himself that where he was they would be also. Thomas said he did not know where Jesus was going and how could he know the way?

Pay close attention to the Lord's reply to Thomas. Jesus said that he is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. There is no other way to the Father. The only way to gain entrance to heaven and to the heavenly Father is through the Father's son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the implication of this? It destroys the modern, feel good philosophy that all religions lead to God. All religions do NOT lead to God. All religions lead to hellfire. The only way to heaven and to God is through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Any one who promotes any other way to God falls under the curse. Any one who promotes any other message than the gospel is under a curse. They are under the curse of God's wrath. (**Galatians 1:8**).

Philip wanted Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus affirmed again that if they had seen him they had seen the Father. Jesus is the express image of God in a man. Everything he did and everything he said was in complete harmony and agreement with the Father. Jesus and the Father were one in spirit, one in purpose, goal, and essence. Jesus is God. God the Father is God. They are one God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

We don't have to understand this. We have to trust in God's word and the revelation of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other truth outside of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe by faith and accept God's word. When we believe God's word we agree to the truth. Any other response to God's word except faith will put a man into spiritual darkness. Hear God's word, believe God's word, receive God's word, abide in God's word, obey God's word.

God's word is our life. God's word gives us life. Jesus is the word of God.

John 14:12-15

The promise in these verses seems to be open ended. Can we pray and ask for absolutely anything? The key is to remember that we pray in the name of Jesus. If you worked for a company and went to the store and used their credit card you would only buy what was needed for the company so that you could do your job. I think this is what we see here in these verses. When we pray in the name of Jesus we ask for what is according to God's will to fulfill God's purpose. We pray according to God's will.

God may want to give you a new car. But do you ask for a new car because you are covetous? Or do you ask for a new car because you need a new car in order to do God's will? Only you and the Lord can answer these questions. However, don't limit what God can do in answer to prayer. The Lord can do miracles. He can do abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think. There is no limit on God's ability to answer prayers.

The Lord wants us to go do good works. These good works are fruit in our lives. We are supposed to be fruitful and do good works. **Ephesians 2:10**, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

Good work is evidence of God in the life of the believer. If you have no fruit in your life then you should be asking the Lord what is the problem. Ask the Lord to search your life and remove any obstacles in your life that prevent you from bearing good fruit for God's kingdom.

James 1:22, "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*"

Don't deceive yourself when you think that all you need is intellectual agreement of Bible doctrine. Many people deceive themselves that what is needed is a clear understanding of Bible doctrine. The religious leaders in the day of Jesus had clear Bible doctrine, but their fruit was evil and wicked. They were an evil and wicked generation even though they had plenty of Bible doctrine and knew the scripture. It is not enough to know Bible doctrine. We must bear fruit. The only way you can bear fruit is by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

John 14:16-26

Jesus promised his disciples that he would pray for them. He prayed for them specifically that Father God would give them the Holy Spirit. In these verses Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Comforter" and also called him the "Spirit of truth". He is both. What does the Holy Spirit do according to Jesus as explained in these verses?

He brings everything into memory that Jesus said. Everything Jesus taught his disciples the Holy Spirit brought back to their memory after Jesus ascended to heaven. He taught the disciples all things and brought back to memory everything Jesus said. The Holy Spirit reminded them of God's word.

The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit and they cannot know him. Jesus said the world cannot know him because they cannot see him. This tells us something about people in the world and how they live. The life of the unbeliever is based upon what they can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. In other words, they live only according to the material world. However, the material world is not true reality. It is only a temporary matrix we live in right now. But this is all an unbeliever can understand. It is only when a man has faith in God that he can understand the universe as it truly exists. Scripture says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.

Those who have faith in Jesus and the Father will have God living with them. A believer has fellowship and communion with God. The Lord makes his home with the man who keeps his word. The world cannot keep God's word because they do not believe in God's word. They only believe what they can see. But a Christian believes what he hears from God. When a Christian hears God's word he believes it and he keeps it. As a result, the Holy Spirit lives with him every day. God makes his home with the believer who trusts in him.

Because Jesus is alive those who trust in him shall live also. Christians will live forever with the Lord. Because he lives we shall live also. This is a great assurance of eternal life that we have in this promise from the Lord Jesus.

John 14:27-31

The Lord gives us peace that is different from the world. What kind of peace does the world give? The world gives false peace. The man of sin will offer a false peace to the world when he comes. The Bible teaches us that there is no true peace for the wicked. What kind of peace does Jesus give us? The Lord gives us peace even when the world around us is going crazy.

The Lord's peace surpasses human understanding. God's peace will protect your heart and your mind when there is no logical reason for you to have peace. Your life may appear to be falling apart on the outside, but inside your heart you can be at complete peace with the Lord. This is a spiritual peace which is given to us by the Holy Spirit. He protects our heart and our mind from fear, panic, anxiety, unbelief, and doubt. He continues to remind us of God's promises in his word. He continues to remind us of how much God loves us. He reminds us that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. He reminds us that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and unrighteousness. He reminds us that God our Father is our provider, and our protector, and our portion forever.

We need to agree with the Holy Spirit. Don't give in to your flesh and to this world and allow fear and unbelief to get a foothold in your mind. We are to bring every thought into obedience to Jesus Christ. Put on the full armor of God and cast down every vain imagination. Resist every thought that contradicts the truth in God's word. Submit yourself to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Jesus told us what would happen before it happened so that when it happened we would believe in him and trust in him. This is the purpose of Bible prophecy. It is to build our faith, encourage us, and comfort us. This is why Paul said when he taught about future events that we were to "comfort one another" with these words. Bible prophecy is for the purpose of edification, encouragement, and comforting God's people. Sadly, I see a lot of Christians use Bible prophecy to install fear and anxiety in people rather than godly edification. People use Bible prophecy as sensationalism in an effort to build the number of subscribers to their YouTube channel or twitter feed. May God help us to learn how to use God's word in God's way for God's purpose.

Jesus said the prince of this world was coming. He spoke about Satan in this verse. He said the devil had nothing on him. There was nothing the devil could do to stop the Lord Jesus from obeying the Father and completing his mission. All the devil could do was hate and kill, but in so doing, he helped God fulfill his purpose in providing Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God.

All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. **Acts 2:21, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.**

John Chapter 15

John 15:1-6

Jesus used an agricultural word picture to help us understand his relationship with his Father and also his relationship with us. The main thing I take away from this is that we have to stay connected to Jesus. If we are not connected to Jesus then we can't do anything right. How do we stay connected to Jesus? The Lord tells us in these verses.

If someone claimed to believe in God but showed no evidence of faith in their life they would eventually fall away. People who were not engaged would not last. Faith and works always go hand in hand. Faith produces fruit. True faith produces fruit. This fruit he talked about was spiritual qualities like Paul described in **Galatians 5:22-23**. Also, fruit was seen as general good works, or leading other people to salvation. Also, good fruit is seen when Christians share God's word with other people, even if those people don't get saved. A Christian sharing the gospel displays good fruit in his life. A Christian who never opens his Bible, never prays, never witnesses to anyone else is not producing fruit. This lack of interest in God's word, prayer, and witnessing probably means the person has no spiritual life in them.

To produce fruit we need to grow spiritually. To grow spiritually we have to stay plugged in with Jesus. How do we stay plugged in? We stay in God's word, stay in prayer, and put into practice what we learn in God's word. We obey the Holy Spirit when he speaks to us.

Notice how Jesus said that his word cleanses us. This reminds me of the verse where it says "washing in the water of the word". God's word has a cleansing, sanctifying effect upon the believer. People who love their sin will not love God's word. But the man who loves righteousness and truth will hunger for God's word. He hungers for the word because the word cleanses his soul. God's word makes us clean.

God the Father chastens us so we can produce more fruit. This is like how a gardener will trim a fruit tree or bush so that next season it will produce even more fruit. God will at times in our life trim us. This means we might go through seasons of suffering in life. Chastening is not a pleasant experience but it produces righteousness in us. It causes us to produce good works that are clean and done with the right motive towards God. These are works which will stand through the fire at the judgment seat of Christ when Christians receive their rewards.

Without the Lord we can do nothing. Jesus is the source of our spiritual life. If we are in anyway disconnected from the Lord we will suffer. Our life will not produce the right kind of fruit, if it bears any fruit at all. The only way we can be spiritually productive is to stay plugged in with Jesus. We must stay in his word and stay in prayer. We must listen and obey the Holy Spirit. We must humble ourselves when God corrects and chastens us.

Those who do not abide are disconnected. A branch that is disconnected has no life in it so it withers up and dies. These branches are used for fuel for the fire. Don't be fuel for the fire. Be a branch bearing fruit for God instead.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

John 15:7-14

This is a wonderful promise the Lord gave us in these verses. If we abide in him and his words abide in us we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us. On the surface this sounds like a blank check. However, if we think about this verse we realize that the promise was contingent upon abiding in Christ and his word abiding in us. If we abide in Christ our heart would not be controlled by idolatry and covetousness. We would not seek things for ourselves, but rather what we would pray for was in line with the example of prayer Jesus gave his disciples. We would pray for God's kingdom to come upon this earth. We would pray each day for our daily bread and God's protection from evil. We would also forgive people and request God's forgiveness. Our goal would be to glorify the name of the Lord Jesus and that his kingdom come upon this earth, and that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This was what it meant to let God's word abide in you. Your mind and heart would be controlled and directed by God's word. When we are under God's word in this manner our prayers are according to God's will. When we pray according to God's will he hears our prayers and we have the answers from God.

God is glorified when our prayers are answered. God is glorified when there is fruit in our lives. What is this fruit? It could be our personal testimony, or good works, or serving others, or sharing God's word. Surely if we lead others to Jesus Christ this is good fruit. Paul also mentioned the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**.

By obeying the Holy Spirit we continue in the Lord's love. We keep ourselves in the love of God by obeying and keeping God's word. The Lord's commandments for us are to love God and love one another. Everything else in the Bible is summed up in loving God and loving one another. When we live like this then we continue in the Lord. If we harden our hearts, allow bitterness to control us, or having unforgiveness towards anyone then we separate from the Lord. To continue with the Lord with must continue in grace, mercy, compassion, forgiveness. We cannot be hardhearted towards anyone. We cannot carry a grudge or unforgiveness. We need to love people. This is hard. It is impossible unless we have the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. But he gives us the Holy Spirit so we can love. (**Romans 5:5**).

Jesus said greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. This is what Jesus did. He laid down his life. He gave his life for us upon the cross at Calvary. He died for us so that we would not perish in our sins. All we have to do now is believe in him, receive him, and continue to abide in him. He is here. He is with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

John 15:15-17

Why did Jesus say that he did not call them servants? Because a servant did not know what his lord did. But the Lord called them his friends. Why did he call them his friends? Because everything Jesus heard from his Father he made known to them.

Everything God wants us to know the Lord Jesus revealed. The Lord is our friend because he opened his heart to us and shared with us his thoughts, his feelings, his goal, his purpose, his will. A servant does not know his master. But we know the Lord. Our relationship with the Lord is not as a slave. We are his servants. We are bond-slaves of the Lord because he purchased us with his own blood.

But this slavery to God is different from the slavery of the world. In the world people are ignorant and in darkness. But God does not want us to serve him in blindness. He gives us light so we can see and chose to obey him. Being a servant of the Lord is being a friend to the Lord because we serve him out of a free will. God gave us a choice. He demonstrated how much he loved us and asked us to choose him. We serve him because we love him.

Out of this heart of love we bring forth good fruits. Our fruit could be good works, or the qualities listed in **Galatians 5:22-23**, or sharing God's word with other people. When we serve the Lord from a heart of love our fruit will remain. Nothing we ever do in the name of the Lord will be forgotten or wasted. Read **1 Corinthians 15:58**.

The Lord pointed us to a relationship with the Father in the name of Jesus. What did this include? It meant that we live according to the name of the Lord. Our life is not controlled by our own name or the names of men but our life is in the Lord Jesus. We are in him and his word is in us. When a man lives like this the Father hears his prayers because he comes to God through the Son of God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 15:18-27

Jesus reminded his disciples and warned them that the world system would hate them. Why did he tell them this repeatedly? Because he did not want them to be offended. Remember how John the Baptist was confused when he was thrown into prison and left to die? It is easy for Christians to become offended at God when they suffer hardship, especially if the suffering is unjust or unfair or undeserved. Christians tend to think in terms of justice. There is nothing wrong with this, but we have to remember also there is a much bigger picture God sees in the universe than we do. Sometimes suffering is necessary. For now, it is necessary that the world hate the disciples of Jesus. If the world loves you, then you probably are not a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus told his disciples to remember that if the world hated you (and it will) that it hated him first. Do we think we deserve better treatment from the world than what Jesus received? There was something about Jesus that the world hated. Jesus told us the reason why the world hated him. The reason they hated him was because he exposed their sins, their sinful nature, and he exposed their self-worship. His life shined a bright light of contrast against all false religion which pretended to love God but really didn't. Jesus demonstrated for us once and for all what love for God really looked like.

We are not greater than the Lord Jesus. If he suffered from the hatred of the world then we will also suffer from the hatred of the world. This hatred takes a lot of forms. It can mean that people are apathetic toward you. In other words, they have no respect for you. They disregard you. They will not listen to you, even if you are not even talking about biblical topics. Just talking about general subjects they ignore you. But it gets much worse than that to the point where they would murder you if given opportunity. The only thing which restrained Satan from killing all Christians was God's protection over the church and his people. God is our protector.

If people truly believe in God they will believe in Jesus because Jesus is God. And if they listen to Jesus then they will also listen to one of the servants of Jesus. Those who are of God hear God's words. This is a good concept to keep in mind. When people won't listen to you don't take it personal. They don't listen to the gospel because they don't belong to God. It has little to do with you personally, even though sinners will always make it about the messenger and not the message. This is how they cloak

and disguise their rejection of the truth. They make it about the messenger. They make it personal. But it is not personal with you. They are actually rejecting God.

Again, the Lord Jesus mentioned the Holy Spirit and said that the Holy Spirit would testify about him. Christians also, working with the Holy Spirit, gave their testimony of Jesus. We share Jesus with people in a lot of different ways, through actions, attitudes, and words.

The main thing I want to remember from these verses is that suffering is part of being a Christian. Suffering and persecution is a normal part of the Christian life. Jesus suffered; we will suffer. Be prepared, be ready. Don't be surprised. Don't be offended. God is in control.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John Chapter 16

John 16:1-6

Jesus told his disciples what would take place so that when those things happened they would not be offended. This is a reason why it is important to be truthful with new Christians. They should know what to expect. They should know that the world will hate them and they will suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ. When persecution comes, and it will come, then they won't be offended. Jesus was plainly telling them that they would suffer. Notice who will make Christians suffer? It is religious people who will persecute Christians. This means there will be people who have some form of religion or philosophy who will cause Christians to suffer. This is the record of history from the beginning. What Jesus said would happen did happen. Read [Foxes' Book of Martyrs](#) for history on this.

Jesus told his disciples that he was going away. This pointed to his ascension back to the Father after his resurrection. When Jesus told them he was going away they were sad. However, as we see through this chapter, it was necessary for Jesus to return to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would come. The Holy Spirit was with them at that time in Jesus, but after Jesus ascended the Holy Spirit came and lived in the disciples. This is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist baptized men in water but the Lord Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit.

Remember Jesus promised his disciples they would be put out of the synagogue. This meant they would be outside the normal framework of the governmental, business, religious, and social system of their day. The synagogue represented more than just a religious gathering place but was a center for the social, cultural, and economic as well. To be put out of the synagogue was to be put out of society. This was more than humiliation but caused a lot of practical difficulty for people.

Are we willing to bear the reproach of Christ? Are we willing to trust in the Lord Jesus when it impacts us financially? Jesus said to count the cost. There is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. However, this price is nothing compared to the price Jesus paid for us at Calvary. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He purchased us with his own blood. We belong to him now. Repent of all self worship and make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior today.

John 16:7-14

Jesus told his disciples ahead of time that he was going away. What he meant by this was that after his resurrection he would ascend back to his Father in heaven. Once he ascended to the Father he would send the Holy Spirit. The Comforter mentioned in this verse was another word used to describe the Holy Spirit. Jesus also called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth and Comforter. Jesus said after his departure he would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples.

Jesus gave us a glimpse into the purpose and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He convicts the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus. He convicts the world of righteousness because Jesus goes to the Father and he can no longer be seen. He convicts the world of judgment because the prince of this world was then judged. The prince of the world mentioned here was Satan, also known as Lucifer, the prince of the power of the air, or the devil.

I think it is interesting that the first work of the Holy Spirit mentioned was convicting people of sin. I wonder how often we work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism in this manner. From what I've seen people tend to focus more on an intellectual approach to prove the truth about creationism versus evolution, or some other atheistic framed argument.

Instead, if we work with the Holy Spirit, we should go after the conscience. How do we do this? We do it like Jesus did it. Jesus flatly told people they were sinners and needed to repent. If they did not repent of their sins they would perish.

How do you convince people they are sinners? You show them from the Bible where their actions are wrong, their words are wrong, their attitudes are wrong, and their presuppositions about morality are messed up. Show them in the Bible that God created male and female. Show them that marriage is based on male and female. Show them scriptures where God values the life of children, and scripture which shows us that God knows us even before we are born. Show people from the Bible how coarse language or joking was spoken against. Show people how immorality is wrong from the Bible. Show them where the apostle Paul teaches us not to steal, or lie, or dishonor our parents. If a man can be shown that he is a sinner then he will realize that he needs a Savior.

I think the entire argument about proving God's existence is beside the point in most situations. It is a smoke screen people hide behind to create a relative moral worldview. Instead of dealing with these issues we should go for the conscience and demonstrate that people are sinners. Show them from the Bible that the wages of sin is death. Show them that Jesus Christ is the only way they can receive forgiveness of their sins.

The Holy Spirit works with us when we share God's word with people. Simply sharing God's word is enough many times. The Holy Spirit takes the word of God and applies it to people's heart and mind. Once a man hears God's word they will not be able to escape from it. God's word is not bound. It will accomplish God's purpose when it goes forth. Preach the word!

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth. We can rely upon the Holy Spirit to show us the truth in every situation. If we take the time to pray and wait on the Lord he will show us the truth. We have a promise from the Lord that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide us into all truth. We

don't have to live in confusion or darkness. We can pray and seek the Lord and he will speak to us. He will teach us from his word. He speaks to us. The Lord will teach us and help us understand. But are we willing to seek the Lord? Are we willing to have faith and not doubt when we ask God for wisdom? We must have faith and not doubt. Believe and we will receive from the Lord. It is God's promise to give us wisdom and understanding if we pray and wait on him.

Paul prayed that the churches would receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We can also pray this and ask the Lord to give us his spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

John 16:15-24

Jesus described the Father and himself in order to help us understand that they are one God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. They are in perfect unity. One God. Three Persons. God is three in one.

Jesus continued to tell his disciples that he returned to his Father. He would no longer live as a humble man on earth but would be the resurrected God Man. The disciples had a hard time following what Jesus said. They could not read the New Testament like we can in order to understand that Jesus would rise from the dead and ascend to heaven. However, Jesus told them all of this on more than one occasion. I think it is interesting how God speaks to us and shows us things and we can't understand it because we are used to thinking in a certain way. It takes faith to understand what the Lord says. They had not yet experienced what Jesus said so the only way they could grasp it would be by faith.

The same is true today. God's word describes the second coming of Jesus. It is clear in the Bible that Jesus Christ will return to this earth. The rapture of the church is clear. The kingdom of God on this earth is clear in the Bible. But for us to understand what the Bible says we must grab hold of it by faith. It is only by faith that we can understand God and what he says. Human logic is not enough. We must reach out by faith and grab hold upon the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus told them they would mourn during the events which would shortly unfold. Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, crucified, die, and be buried. This would cause a heartbreak that we probably cannot comprehend. For us to understand the anguish of these men when they saw these events would mean we would have to believe what they believed before it happened. What did they believe? They believed Jesus Christ was the King of Israel and the Messiah. Can you imagine what it would feel like following a man whom you knew was the Messiah and the King of the world? And then to see him betrayed, condemned, and killed in the worst possible way imaginable? We can't even come close to understanding the anguish and heartbreak these disciples endured.

But their tears would only last for a while. Because after the resurrection they experienced a joy which is beyond comparison. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Can you imagine what it was like to be one of his disciples in that room where he appeared and said "Peace be unto you." My heart fills with joy just trying to imagine what that must have been like.

I really like the promise which the Lord gave us here. Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full. The Lord wants our joy to be full. He desires for our heart to be filled with joy and peace. It is his will for us to have joy in our hearts. The Lord Jesus is the greatest joy we can ever know. He is the

Lord God Almighty. To be in his presence is to know joy that is unsurpassed. Joy unspeakable and full of glory.

John 16:25-33

Jesus taught his disciples and us that we would face tribulation in the world. As Christians we face opposition. We are resisted and opposed by the spirit of this present world system and by those who walk in agreement with it. The more we grow in the Lord the more the world will recognize us as foreign and reject us. Look how quickly the world turned on the Lord Jesus when he revealed himself. When we walk in the Spirit people who are in the flesh will know we are different. This is on a level where people may not even be conscious of the difference but will feel hostile towards the Christian for no apparent reason. I've actually seen this in action before. Sometimes people will be hostile and won't even know why they are being hostile toward you.

Jesus gave us a word of encouragement. He said to be of good cheer. It is OK if people give us problems because it teaches us patience, and humility, and unconditional love. As a Christian we learn how to love our enemies. If we want to walk with the Lord we will learn. Or we can choose not to learn and live like the world. But we will never be one of them. Once we are born again they will never accept us as one of their own. We are ruined for this world when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We might as well just go all the way with the Lord and stop pretending we are like everybody else. We're not. We are heading to heaven, and they are heading to the pit. Don't pretend we are like them. It is easy to do that because we want to fit in. But we don't fit in. We have the Holy Spirit living in us, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us will make people not like us. The Holy Spirit in us convicts them of their sins. Why should they like us? Our attitude, way of life, mannerisms, our lack of curse words or lack of joining in with coarse joking all works together to make them hate us. They hate us because our presence exposes them. It shines a light on them.

But be of good cheer. Jesus overcame the world. Because he overcame the world we also in him have overcome the world. This world system passes away. It is temporary. We are heading towards a new world that is eternal and will last forever.

Remember, forgive them, love them pray for them, bless them. Reject bitterness. Let the Holy Spirit fill us up and love people.

John Chapter 17

John 17:1-3

When Jesus prayed to his Father he lifted up his eyes to heaven. Why is this detail included? It is significant. God is in heaven. We are on earth. When we pray we are approaching the Lord who lives in heaven above. God sits upon his throne. We approach the Lord with reverence and sincerity.

Jesus knew exactly where he was at on God's schedule. He was in perfect union with the plan which God set before him. He knew it was time for him to go to the cross, to die for our sins, and to be raised again from the dead on the third day. His prayer was that his Father would glorify the Son. How would God the Father glorify the Son? The Father glorified the Son by raising him from the dead on the third day.

Jesus has power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as God gave him. Here we witness a mystery which men cannot explain with systems of theology. This mystery of God's foreknowledge of those who would choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said God gave those men to him. God chose them. But isn't it man's choice to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior? Yes. This is a mystery. It is a mistake to try to place this mystery inside of a man-made system of theology. Just accept the fact that man has a free will and can choose to believe in Jesus or not. And God chooses those who will believe in Jesus. Both are true in a way that we cannot comprehend on this side of eternity.

Jesus told us what eternal life is. He described eternal life as knowing God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Eternal life, then, is not something abstract. It is knowing God in a personal relationship. Man can commune with God. God communes with men because of what Jesus did at Calvary. The chasm which separated man from God was bridged by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we can draw near to God in full assurance of faith. We can find rest for our souls through the forgiveness provided by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. We find new purpose in living by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The God shaped void in the soul of man is only filled when we return to God by faith in Jesus Christ. It is then we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills the emptiness in man. Man tried to fill this void with different things which the world offered. But nothing satisfied this longing in the heart of man. Only the Holy Spirit can fill this hole in the heart of men. Only the Lord Jesus can truly satisfy our thirst and hunger.

Eternal life is knowing God through his Son Jesus Christ. Decide today that you will forsake all other religions, philosophies, or psychology. Forsake every program and every self-help system you find. Turn to Jesus with all your heart and allow him to be the one and only Lord and Savior of your life. You will not be disappointed. Eternal life is yours by faith in Jesus Christ.

John 17:4-8

Jesus completed the work his Father gave him to do. What was this work? It was the finished and completed work of Christ. It was the work of salvation for man. It was the work of atonement. It was the work of being the lamb of God. It was the work of substitution. He took our place on the cross. We deserved to die because we sinned and fell short of the glory of God. But Jesus took our punishment upon himself so that he would suffer in our place. Now, if we believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior we can escape the justified wrath of God against our sins. Sin demands a payment. That payment is death. Jesus died in our place so that we would not have to. In order to benefit from what Jesus did for us we must believe the gospel and receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

What is this gospel? Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** to see a basic outline of the gospel. It is this message of Jesus Christ which saves men from sin, from self, from this world, from Satan, from death, and from hell.

What did Jesus mean when he talked about the Father glorifying him? At minimum we know he meant his resurrection. God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus prayed for his heavenly Father to raise him from the dead once he gave his life upon the cross at Calvary.

Jesus said that he manifested God's name to the men who followed him. There is a lot to be said about this. One thought which comes to my mind is that we have two paths of life to chose from. One path is to live according to one's own name. This means you exalt yourself, promote yourself, and live for self.

This is the foundation of the world system. It is the root and branch of the entire world system we see around us.

There is another way to live, though. It is to live by the name of the Lord. When we take the name of the Lord then we let go of our own name. We no longer promote our own name. Our mission is no longer to make a name for our self. Our mission is now to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

When we take the name of Christ then we deny self, take up the cross, follow him. These are spiritual laws. You cannot worship self and worship God at the same time. You cannot live by your own name and the name of Jesus at the same time. People try, but eventually every man gets thrown off that tottering fence. You cannot live for self and Jesus at the same time. You cannot be a Christian and exalt your own name.

What did John the Baptist say? I must decrease. He must increase. There is no way around this. It is a fixed spiritual reality.

Not only did Jesus manifest God's name to his disciples but he also gave them God's word. This is a pattern we see in the lives of the prophets in the Old Testament. They lived by God's name, and they received God's word. They no longer were their own. They belonged to God. As a result they received and proclaimed God's word.

God's word gives us life. It is alive. The word of the Lord is spirit and life. It gives life to others. This life lasts forever. God's word never diminishes, or fails, or fades away. It endures forever, just like God's name endures forever, just like God endures forever. He is eternal life. To be connected to him is to have eternal life.

Once they knew God's name and received God's word then they knew who Jesus was. They knew he was from God. How did they know this? They found out for themselves by believing in God's name and God's word that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Jesus is exactly who he says he is. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Hallelujah.

John 17:9-16

Jesus prayed for his people. Jesus prayed for his disciples. He prayed for those who heard his word and believed what he said to them. Jesus said those who heard his word and believed in him were given to him by God the Father.

We can't really understand how this works this side of eternity. We must accept this mystery by faith.

What does it mean that Jesus was glorified in us? How was the Lord Jesus glorified when we believe in him? It brings glory to God when we believe his word. It brings glory and honor to the Lord when we hear, and receive, and believe the word which he gave us. Faith honors God. Faith honors the Lord. Do you want to glorify God? Do you want to honor the Lord? Then believe his word. Believe his promises. Hold fast to his word and his promises. Don't let his word go. Hold onto his word.

Jesus said he was no longer in the world. He only had a few hours left with his disciples. He went to Calvary, and to the grave, and was resurrected on the third day. Life would no longer be the same. He would no longer be walking the dusty trail with them, but now would be with them forever in the Spirit. He would not only walk with them, but the Holy Spirit would live in their hearts.

Jesus said while he was with his disciples he kept them in the name of his Father. Their provision, and protection, and portion all came because they lived by the name of the Father. Now Jesus went to heaven and he prayed for them that the Father would provide for them, and protect them, and be their portion.

None of the Lord's disciples were lost except the son of perdition. It was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled, and as a result, there was always one of those twelve disciples who was a traitor in their midst. There had to be one traitor in order for the scripture to be fulfilled.

This is another mystery that we must hold by faith. We cannot understand from our limited human perspective why it was necessary for Judas. It was. It had to be. There was no other way. Jesus had to die on the cross for us. This was the only way men could be saved from their sins.

Jesus said these things in front of his disciples so that their joy would be full. This is a joy which went beyond temporary happiness. It was an abiding satisfaction with God, with God's word, with God's plan, with God's purpose. It was a deep, abiding knowledge of the permanence of God and his love for us.

Notice Jesus did not hide the fact that people would hate Christians. Because Christians hear God's word which Jesus gave to us, and we receive God's word, and believe God's word, then the world hates us. Why?

The world hates faith. It hates what it cannot see. The world hates God. Why? Because the world wants to be in control. The world wants to live by its own man-made rules. It does not want to submit to God, and indeed, it cannot.

Those who hear and receive and believe God's word are no longer part of the world system any longer. The world hates any man who believes in Jesus. This hatred is demonstrated in a million different ways. Sometimes those who are in the world do not even realize they hate Christians. Their interpretation of their emotions is always in the context of self-worship. So, hatred will not be seen as vile. It will not be seen as negative. Hatred in their mind feels more like a sense of superiority. They really think they are smarter than the Christian. They feel smarter, stronger, more informed. They think they are wise! Isn't this what the serpent promised Eve? Wisdom? Yes, this is the lie they believe. They think they are wise. But God says they are fools. (**Psalm 14:1**).

Jesus said he was leaving the world. We are not of this world, but we are left here as his ambassadors. We represent the Lord Jesus Christ to the world. We are witnesses. We are lights. We are salt. God leaves us here to act as a preservative and help others come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus did not pray for us to be taken out of the world system of government, business, and society. He prayed we would be protected and delivered from the evil in this world. He prayed the Father would protect us from the evil spirit which energizes the world system. This evil spirit consists of the pride of life, the

lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. Jesus prayed for us to be delivered and protected from this evil while we serve him within this world system. We are on the mission field.

How do we escape the corruption of the world while living in this system? Don't allow your heart to love the same thing the world loves.

First of all, remember, the world loves SELF over everything. Every person who succeeds in the world system has learned to worship self. Self is their portion. The entrance for many into the world system is the perceived need for provision. And then it moves on to protection. But it ends with worshipping of self. This is the pride of life. This corruption is progressive. It does not stand still.

The Christian does not stand still either. We are to grow in grace. We add to our faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and kindness, and love. Our goal is not self. Our goal is Jesus Christ. We obey the Holy Spirit. We do not obey the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes, or the pride of life. Our purpose in this world is to represent Jesus Christ. Our purpose is to be salt and light. Our purpose is not self-provision, self-protection, or self-worship. We do not live like the world does. Instead, we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then God gives us provision, and protection, and he is our portion forever.

Today is the day of salvation. It is time to let go of your life, and accept Jesus Christ as your life. His life lasts forever. Let go of this world, and embrace the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn away from Satan (self-worship), and turn to God. Turn from darkness, and turn to the light of Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of Jesus. He is here. He is speaking. Can you hear him?

John 17:17-23

God's word is truth. We are sanctified by the truth, the word of God. This reminds me of the scripture "*washing by the water of the word*". Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. He said they were clean already, but washed their feet. What did this mean? Everyday we need to be washed, even though we are clean through the finished and completed work of Christ. We are secure in our salvation. We have eternal life. But while we live in this world we need a daily cleansing in the word. The sin in this world, the sin in our flesh, corrupts, corrodes, and if left to itself will cause us to follow further and further away. We need the daily cleansing to follow up close. We need to walk in step with the Holy Spirit. This work is done by the word. How do you apply this? If you are not reading your Bible you are not being cleansed daily. God's word contains spiritual life which will cleanse away the death in the world. It gives us life each day. It is like the manna Israel collected daily. We must touch the Lord through his word daily.

As God sent Jesus into this world he sent his disciples into the world. How did God send Jesus into the world? Jesus came into the world in the most humble way possible. In a stable. Laid in a manger. Growing up in a poor family, in a poor neighborhood, in a poor village. How did Jesus live? What was his purpose? How does the Lord want us to live in this world?

1 Corinthians 7:30-31, "*And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*"

How do we live in this world? Recognize it is passing away. Do not hold on to your life or possessions here. This is all temporary and transient and passing away. Don't live for this world.

How did God send Jesus into the world? He sent Jesus into this world to die on the cross for our sins. What is our purpose then? Certainly it is not to live for self. Our focus and goal should not be self. Our goal is God's glory by living by faith and obeying the Holy Spirit. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are salt in this earth, we are light in this world. We lay down our lives so that others can receive the message of life, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus not only prayed for those disciples with him at that moment, but also everyone who would believe in him because of their message. They shared the gospel, preaching throughout the known world at that time. Jesus prayed for those who would be saved as a result of their ministry. This meant what Jesus prayed in this verse was for us today who believe the gospel passed down to us after thousands of years. Jesus prayed for us. He still prays for us. He lives forever making intercession. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him for he lives forever making intercession for us. There is no other mediator between God and men but the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus prayed for his disciples and those who would believe, and he saw that the world would know about him as a result of this. The world today knows about Jesus because there were always people who believed in him and in God's word. People know about Jesus today because people proclaimed the gospel. This work continues to this day.

Have you believed? Have you received? Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time to humble yourself and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will return soon. We will give an account of our lives to him. The only hope you have when you stand before God is whether or not Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. Call upon the name of the Lord today. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

John 17:24-26

In these final verses of the Lord's prayer we see that the Lord Jesus prayed that his people could be with him. The Lord wanted all his people to be with him. The Lord desires to return and get his people. He will return and we will be with him where he is. He told his disciples in John 14 that he would return and that we would be with him where he is.

Have you ever thought about Jesus wanting us to be with him. I know I want to be with the Lord. But do we ever stop and realize the Lord wants us to be with him where he is? One day we will be. There is an appointed time. A day will come when God the Father will speak and it will be the day of the Lord's return to his people. We will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.

We no longer live by our own name, but we live in the name of the Lord Jesus. We go forward from this point calling upon the name of the Lord. He is our life. He is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion forever.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

John Chapter 18

John 18:1-9

Jesus had a routine his disciples knew including Judas. The betrayer knew where Jesus was and used this to betray him. Keep in mind Jesus knew that Judas was aware of his routine. Jesus knew where Judas would bring the soldiers. The Lord was in control the entire time. Jesus asked them who they were after they fell to the ground. This is a description of a supernatural event where Jesus spoke and men fell down. The Lord made sure none of his disciples were arrested. He was a true shepherd. When the wolves came he protected his sheep. When Jesus protected his disciples it fulfilled Bible prophecy.

The Lord is always in control even if it does not appear on the surface that he is in control. God knows everything. Judas thought Jesus walked into his trap, but in reality, Judas walked into the Lord's plan. You cannot outwit the Lord. The enemy thinks he is smart enough to outwit God. God will always have the last laugh. God sets aside the evil man for the day of evil. Everything works together to bring glory to God and benefit those who are on the Lord's side. If we do not understand these evil times it is because we have not seen the end of the Lord. Think about Job. Consider the end of the Lord. Consider what men mean for evil God means for good. **Romans 8:28**. All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

John described the power of the Lord's word. John remembered how the Lord protected his disciples. John remembered Bible prophecy was fulfilled through what the Lord Jesus did.

Sometimes problems in life may seem insurmountable. However, as we see in this passage, all we need is for the Lord to speak. All we need is for God to speak into our life and everything can change. This is why I continue to have hope and faith every day. I wake up and my heart hopes in the Lord. I know nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Nothing is impossible for God.

John 18:10-18

Peter did not understand what the Lord Jesus was doing. He struck with his sword. Peter's actions remind me how many times I've tried to fight the Lord's battles in my strength. I don't always understand what the Lord is doing in a particular situation. However, I should remember Ephesians 6. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Our battle is not against people but against the powers of darkness. Jesus fought the long war against Satan, but Peter fought one small skirmish which didn't amount to anything. The name of the man Peter attacked was recorded. Malchus. Is he mentioned by name because he later became a Christian? Remember Peter withstood the Lord before when Jesus said he would die on a cross. Jesus said to Peter "*get thee behind me Satan*". Again, Peter was against the purpose of the Lord. Jesus told him to put up his sword. Incredibly, Peter was not arrested for cutting off Malchus' ear. This was evidence of the power of the Lord to protect his disciples during this.

The Lord Jesus was taken to the religious leaders. Peter and John followed the crowd who arrested Jesus. John went in because he was known somehow in the circle of the religious leaders. John spoke to someone to let Peter in. Peter was confronted by someone with the charge that he was a disciple of Jesus. I don't think Peter denied Jesus because he was afraid. I think Peter's denial came as a result of confusion. In this state of confusion, he denied the Lord. He did not know what Jesus was doing. As long as he thought Jesus had his back he was willing to fight the Roman army. But now he was alone. Confused. He denied that he knew the Lord.

Peter stood there with them warming himself. I often compare this scene to the scripture in Psalm 1 which mentions standing with sinners. Judas stood with those who arrested Jesus. Peter now stood with them and warmed himself at their fire. For Judas this was a deadly failure. For Peter it would be a lesson he would never forget for the rest of his life.

John 18:19-24

This interrogation from the religious leaders reminds me of how the religious leaders questioned the blind man Jesus healed. This interview had nothing to do with men who wanted to find out the truth about a situation.

Instead, this was all about trapping Jesus in his words and condemning him. The Lord knew what this was about. He allowed himself to be brought into this situation.

All of a sudden someone struck Jesus for his reply during the interview. The man who struck Jesus seemed out of order and Jesus brought attention to how the man was out of order in striking him.

Is Jesus protesting this treatment? I don't think he was protesting, because he already knew what would happen to him. I think the Lord was drawing attention to this for some other reason.

Why? It showed the depravity of man. It demonstrated the reality that men are only pretending to be civilized. When men have an opportunity they release the evil in their hearts. People look for opportunities, any opportunity, to sin and justify their sin. When evil is socially acceptable it will open the floodgate of evil in the hearts of men.

Jesus did nothing wrong. This man who struck Jesus was out of place and out of order, even though shortly Jesus would be brutally beaten and tortured and crucified.

This man was getting a jump on what was happening. Somehow this man already knew Jesus was open prey. How did he know this? Everyone knew the religious leaders were only pretending to interview Jesus. This was no true trial. There was no justice being sought in those proceedings. It was a gang bent on lynching Jesus. The spirit of murder was coursing through the veins of those people. They could smell blood in the water.

These events remind me of the account of when the apostle Paul was struck while he was judged by the religious leaders. Imagine if you were in a courtroom today and the bailiff felt like he could just haul off and sucker punch someone on trial. How would that make you feel? What if it was your family member, who was falsely accused, and was on trial, and all of a sudden an officer in the court decided to give your family member a bloody nose for no reason? How would you feel?

This was wrong on so many levels. But what I want to draw attention to is the spiritual dimension in this account. This man who struck Jesus manifested the power of the devil that controlled these people.

Do you think devils control people today? You hear a lot today about cabals, secret agendas, and conspiracy theories. In my opinion, I think men know very little of what they are actually involved in. They have no idea most of the time why they do what they do. They are being used by the devil.

Ephesians 2:1-3, *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world and of the ruler of the power of the air, **the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience**. All of us also lived among them at one time, fulfilling the cravings of our flesh and indulging its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath."*

This scripture teaches us that powers of the devil work through men who live according to the flesh. I've seen professing Christians who lived according to the flesh be used by the devil to speak his words. It is possible for a professing believer to have his mouth taken over by the devil. Remember how Jesus rebuked Peter and said to him, *"Get thee behind me Satan"*.

The anger toward Jesus in this mock trial went beyond human anger or cruelty. There was a snake in the grass. There was a serpent injecting spiritual poison into these people.

May God help us to remember this. **Ephesians 6:12**, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*

The Lord's fight that day was not with these people. Jesus came into this world to die upon the cross so that these people could be saved. The real battle raging was a spiritual battle between the Lord and the forces of darkness. The Lord completely defeated the devil through his death, burial, and resurrection. He spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness and stripped them of all their authority and power. (**Colossians 2:15**).

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

John 18:25-27

Peter was in a state of confusion and he stood too close to the enemy's fire. Sooner or later the world will challenge you if you belong to Jesus or not. The people challenged Peter whether or not he was a disciple of Jesus.

At that moment I believe that Peter was genuinely confused. He did not understand what was happening with Jesus. He was ready to fight in the garden, but now he didn't know what to do. Maybe he thought he would pretend like he was with everyone else until he could figure out what was happening.

But the world won't give you time to figure things out. You have to be ready to give your answer when they come knocking. Peter failed this time. Later, however, he would be restored by the Lord Jesus and would go on to preach the gospel boldly.

At that moment, however, the powers of darkness filled the atmosphere around these events. Peter denied that he knew the Lord.

The Lord Jesus told Peter he would do this. In other gospels we read that when Peter remembered the word of the Lord he went out and wept bitterly. Even this denial of being a disciple of Jesus was known by the Lord ahead of time.

I'm glad the Lord knows everything about us and yet still loves us. He still went to the cross and died for us to save us, and redeem us, and purchase our salvation. He gives to us eternal life, not because we have been perfect or got our life together, but because he loves us. Jesus loves us and gave his life upon Calvary for our redemption.

All we have to do is hear, receive, and believe God's word. Change your mind about what you've been thinking all your life, and instead, believe the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Everyone who believes that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord is saved. Call upon the name of the Lord.

Christian, be ready to give an answer for the Lord. Do not be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, be ready to participate in the afflictions of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 18:28-40

It stands out to me that these religious leaders were concerned about ceremonial cleanness when their hearts were filled with murder. This showed the insanity of dead religion and man-made systems of religion. Remember Jesus said that true Christians would be killed by those who convinced themselves they did God a favor. We see this through all history. The largest man-made religions are responsible for the most bloodshed.

Notice they would not answer Pilate's questions directly. Pilate asked them what was the charge and their reply was that they would not have brought Jesus to him if he was not guilty. You see here the duplicity of those who operate in darkness and are empowered by the devil. You cannot confront people like this with truth because they will evade the truth always. No matter what you say to them they will turn your words upside down and inside out. This is an example of spiritual warfare.

Pilate told them to take him and judge him according to their own law. Pilate rightly did not want to have anything to do with this. The reply of the religious leaders showed their purpose and goal. They wanted to kill Jesus. They were determined to use Pilate to kill Jesus.

When Pilate interviewed him the Lord Jesus stated that his kingdom was not of this world. The world system that is in place right now on this planet is totally opposite of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. One aspect that separates this current world system from God's Kingdom is the fact that this current world system is built on the names of men. God's kingdom is not built on the names of men. It is built upon one name only, and that name is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is King of kings, and he is Lord of lords. The devil offered the kingdoms of this world to Jesus but the Lord refused. He would not accept things as they are. He will remake all things after the pattern which is in heaven. This world will not be based on the names of men but it will be built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other name. (**Acts 4:12**).

Pilate could find no fault in the Lord Jesus. He tried to release him, but instead the religious leaders and the people demanded the man Barabbas be released instead. This is a good metaphor for us. Jesus took the place of Barabbas. Jesus took our place. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He is our substitute. What did Barabbas feel that day? Was he thankful? Did he appreciate the fact that Jesus took his place? Do you?

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord today and be saved.

John Chapter 19

John 19:1-15

Why did Pilate have Jesus flogged? He tried to placate the religious leaders. He thought if he punished Jesus that would be enough for them. He underestimated their determination to kill Jesus. They were not content with Jesus being flogged and mocked. They wanted him dead. This determination to murder Jesus was unexpected for Pilate. He did not know the powers of hell he was up against that day.

While Pilate tried to get the situation off his plate the religious leaders told Pilate that Jesus said he was the Son of God. The religious leaders wanted Jesus to die because he said he was the Son of God. This made Pilate more afraid. He was in way over his head.

Pilate talked to Jesus again. Jesus did not provide him with any information to set him free. He came to give his life as a ransom for us. He came to die upon the cross for our sins.

Pilate tried to convince the religious leaders to let Jesus go. Instead, the religious leaders invoked Caesar. One thing which scared a man in government was invoking the name of someone superior to himself. Pilate could not get around this. The religious leaders intentionally invoked the name of Caesar. As a result, Pilate could not get out of the situation. If he released Jesus the religious leaders could complain that he was a traitor to Caesar. If he surrendered Jesus to be crucified he would sin against his own conscience and what he knew was right and wrong. Eventually, he had no choice. This was why Jesus said to him that those who handed him over to Pilate had the greater sin.

When the religious leaders said they had no king but Caesar they repudiated not only Jesus but Jehovah God. They drove out God as their king and replaced him with Caesar. This happens again in the last days when Israel will be deceived by the Antichrist. Another man, the man of sin, will come in his own name. This man of sin will be accepted by Israel. Only when he desecrates the temple will they realize they accepted the wrong man.

This is what happens when anyone rejects Jesus. There is no such thing as a spiritual vacuum. If we reject Jesus we embrace the devil. There is no in-between. God is infinitely greater than the devil but God will not violate the free will of men. If men reject God then by default they follow the same path as Satan and go to the lake of fire.

Why will you die in your sins? It is not God's will for anyone to perish in their sins. Turn from your unbelief today and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He is your one and only hope of escaping eternal darkness and damnation. Call upon his name. Jesus Christ is Lord!

John 19:16-27

Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. The soldiers led him away to Golgotha where he was crucified between two criminals. Pilate had a sign attached to his cross that read "Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews." Why did he do this? Perhaps this was his way of getting back at the religious leaders? But it was a very appropriate sign for Jesus. He is and will always be the King of the Jews. He is the King over

every nation. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The religious leaders wanted Pilate to change the way the sign was written so that it implied Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. But Pilate did not budge. He wrote that Jesus is the King of the Jews.

While Jesus died on the cross the soldiers cast lots for his clothing. This fulfilled specific Bible prophecies which said that men would cast lots for his clothing. Even the smallest details of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfilled what the prophets said would happen. How did God prove to men that he is God? He tells us what will happen before it happens so that when it happens we will believe. This is the purpose of Bible prophecy. It is meant to build our faith and give us assurance of our faith in Jesus. A lot of the prophecies we see in this passage were originally written down for us in **Psalm 22**. Jesus even quoted this chapter while he was on the cross. Read all the gospel accounts to give a full picture of what happened that day when Jesus was crucified. See also **Matthew 27:32-44; Mark 15:21-32; and Luke 23:26-43**.

While Jesus hung on the cross he made final arrangements so that his mother would be taken care of. He assigned his disciple John to take care of Mary, his mother. Jesus always thought about others. Even as he died on the cross he thought of others. His love endures forever. God's love never fails.

God loves you. How much does God love you? He died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and mine. He gave himself upon the cross to rescue us from a devil's hell. Will you believe the gospel today? Will you repent of your sin and turn to God and put your faith in Jesus Christ? Your eternal destiny weighs in the balance. Today is the day of salvation.

John 19:28-37

Jesus focused on the importance of scripture being fulfilled correctly. When the Lord knew everything was accomplished according to scripture he said he was thirsty. There was a jar of sour wine nearby. They soaked a sponge and lifted it up to him. After he received it he said, "It is finished." When Jesus said this he yielded up his spirit. Jesus completed everything which God the Father gave him to do. He completed the work of salvation. He completed the work of redemption. This is called the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus did for us we can have assurance of salvation. We can rest in the Lord with confidence that our sins are forgiven, we are justified before God, and that we now will live forever with God. We receive eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished, completed work upon the cross of Calvary.

Because of the approaching holiday the religious people did not want bodies hanging on crosses. To expedite the death of those crucified they broke their legs so they would die faster. However, when they came to Jesus he was already dead so they did not break his legs. Instead, they pierced his side with a spear. This was proof he was dead. It was also another fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The scriptures fulfilled were verses which read that his bones would not be broken and they would look upon the one they pierced. John was a witness and he saw all of this. He tells us a truthful, accurate report of the events which took place that day.

This entire section focused a lot upon fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Jesus put a lot of emphasis on Bible prophecy with his disciples. The disciples included many quotes from the Old Testament in their record of the account of the life of Jesus, his ministry, and his death and resurrection.

Shouldn't we also be concerned today about Bible prophecy in our own day and time? There are many Bible prophecies which describe events leading up to the second return of Jesus Christ to this earth. Many of those Bible prophecies could be interpreted as being fulfilled in our own day and time. Jesus taught us that when we see these things beginning to come to pass then to lift up our heads because our redemption is drawing near. Now is the time to be saved. Now is the time to look for the return of Jesus Christ. Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

John 19:38-42

These closing verses for **John 19** mention the two men who buried the Lord Jesus. Both of these men were religious leaders and also disciples of the Lord Jesus. One was Joseph of Arimathea and the other Nicodemus. John chapter 3 records the conversation the Lord Jesus had with Nicodemus.

The burial of Jesus fulfilled Bible prophecy. **Isaiah 53:9**, *"He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth."* This prophecy points to how Jesus was crucified with criminals and was buried by these two rich men in their tomb.

Everything in the life, ministry, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was foretold in Bible prophecy. The Lord told what would happen before it happened so that when it happened we would believe.

These two men took care of the Lord's body. They wrapped it in linen cloth along with the spices and buried him according to Jewish tradition.

God the Father placed us into Christ Jesus. Paul later taught us in the book of Romans that when Christ was buried we were buried with him. (**Romans 6:4**). This is what water baptism represents. We are buried with Christ through water baptism. When we come back up out of the water we are resurrected with him. Our old life of sin is now buried in a tomb. We are dead to that old life. We have been raised together with Christ to live a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God does this work for us. When I was a young Christian I used to wonder how I could bury myself with Christ. I couldn't work it out in my mind. I tried to approach these spiritual truths with my rational, logical mind but I could not work it out. Finally, one day I realized I don't have to figure this out. This is a work which God did for me. I simply accept by faith that God placed me into Christ. When the Lord Jesus was buried I was buried in him. It is no longer I who live, but now it is Christ who lives in me. I accept the truth by faith. I trust in the Holy Spirit to apply the power of this truth to my everyday life situations.

What did these men feel when they buried the Lord? What did they think? I'm sure they were heart broken. They probably were confused why all this happened to the Lord Jesus. Yet, they were moved with love for the Lord to make sure he had a proper burial.

John Chapter 20

John 20:1-9

Early on the first day of the week. This would be early on Sunday morning. While it was still dark. This shows us how early it was. Why are we given details like this? Details like time and place show us that the events recorded are rooted in historical places and times. Remember this was not a made-up story. This happened.

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb where Jesus was buried by Joseph and Nicodemus. What did she expect to find? Why was she there? We're not given a reason why she was there, only what she found when she got there. She found the stone was removed and that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was gone. She immediately went to report this to Peter and John. She said they took the body of Jesus out of the tomb and "we" do not know where they have put him. The "we" was probably the other women who were mentioned at the tomb that morning as well. Peter and John went to investigate at the tomb. They both ran to the tomb. They found the Lord was gone, but his grave clothes were still there. John saw this and believed that Jesus was risen from the dead. They did not understand at that moment the scriptures foretold that Jesus would rise from the dead.

It is interesting that Mary Magdalene had such a prominent place in this record of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I do not understand all this implies but it shows us that her love for the Lord enabled her to do what others could not. Her love kept her at his tomb and she continued to seek him even after everyone else gave up and went home. Love endures. Love never fails.

Is this what the Lord wants from us? I think Mary was underlined here because of the great love she had for Jesus. Is this the same Mary that Jesus cast devils out of? Is this the same Mary that anointed Jesus with expensive ointment? There are a few different women named Mary in the gospels, but I like to think this is the same one. She loved the Lord Jesus. She was forgiven much, and she loved much.

Also, I remember there was a Mary who anointed Jesus in preparation for his burial. Is this the same Mary? Jesus said her story would always be told in conjunction with the proclamation of the gospel. If this is that same Mary then indeed she was placed right in the middle of the gospel narrative. She was there as a first witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Jesus died on a cross, he was buried in a tomb, and on the third day, a Sunday morning, he rose from the dead. We know he rose from the dead because of the testimony of Mary Magdalene. We know from the testimony of Peter and John. These were real people. They were real men and real women who loved the Lord, who lived with him, and were witnesses of his resurrection. It is upon their testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that we stake our entire salvation. Their testimony is true. We can trust in their account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He died in our place. He rose from the dead. By this he demonstrated he has power over death and the grave. He lives forever. Death no longer has any hold upon him. We who believe in him and the testimony in scripture will live forever with him.

John 20:10-18

The disciples went home but Mary continued outside the tomb. She was crying and she looked into the tomb. She saw two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. They asked her why she was crying. Mary, obviously beside herself, said she didn't know where the body of Jesus was at.

At this point the Lord Jesus arrived. Perhaps Mary broke his heart and he had to let her know he was alive. She did not recognize it was Jesus at first. Jesus asked her why she was crying. He asked her who she looked for. Mary thought he was the gardener and told him if he took the Lord's body she wanted it back.

Then Jesus revealed himself to her when he said her name: "Mary". Immediately she knew who he was. Jesus told her not to cling to him but instead deliver a message to the disciples. Jesus called his disciples "my brothers". That seems very significant to me. Jesus called us his brother. That makes my heart yearn to be with the Lord. Mary did as the Lord told her. She went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and she told them what he had said to her.

These verses teach us that our love for the Lord can touch him. The Lord is moved with compassion by the feeling of our emotions and our love for him. I believe one reason why the Lord appeared to Mary like this was because of her emotion and love. The Lord is touched by the feeling of our infirmities. He is moved by compassion for us. This shows us the tender heart of God our Father. The Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all that he has made.

The Lord appeared to people but they didn't always recognize him. Why did God hide himself like this? Why did the Lord show up in our lives and we didn't even know it was the Lord? Many times I believe God intervened in my life and I did not realize until later that God helped me or had intervened. I can see now, looking back, some amazing things which happened in my life that I now know was completely the Lord. I did not recognize it at the time. Why did the Lord hide himself like this? I believe this shows us something about his character and humility. The Lord's humility is so foreign to us. We can scarcely comprehend how delicate and thoughtful the Lord's humility is. I don't know why, but this gives me a great deal of comfort when I think about the humility of Jesus. We hardly ever come into contact with people who are so humble. When people do something good they always want other people to know about it.

How can I apply this to my life? I can remind myself not to make a name for myself. Don't put myself forward. Help others in a quiet, unassuming manner. Do not draw attention to myself.

Another lesson here was that love for Jesus could move his heart. When we love the Lord he responds. When I lift up my heart and worship the Lord he hears, he sees, and he responds to our love and worship. The Lord inhabits the praises of his people. Faith in God brings glory to God. Trust in the Lord and don't be afraid. No matter what circumstances look like the Lord is still here with us. He will never leave or forsake us.

John 20:19-23

Jesus appeared to individual people but here was the record of when he appeared to a group at one time. This was the same Sunday he rose from the dead. It was at the end of the day in the evening. The doors were shut and they were all locked into a room because of fear of the religious leaders. Jesus

appeared in the midst of them and greeted them with peace. He proved it was himself by showing them his hands and his side. This was the proof that he was crucified, and died, but he was now alive again. From this we have proof that he did not resurrect in a spirit or ghost form. He had a physical body which they could see and touch but it was different. His body was a resurrected body. He could appear and disappear even though his body was solid as well.

Jesus pronounced peace upon them again and then charged them with their mission. He told them that even as the Father sent him that he would also send them out. He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Ghost.

He told them the sins they forgave were forgiven. If they retained anyone's sins they were retained. My take on this is simple. When we share the gospel we give people a way to receive forgiveness. However, if we don't share the gospel we prevent people from hearing the message which provides forgiveness of sins. Our authority as believers is in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are Christian cults who teach that men have power in themselves to pronounce God's forgiveness on someone almost like a magical word. This is what the Catholics do with their priest system. I think that is an aberration of what Jesus taught here.

All believers have the opportunity to share the good news of the gospel. When we share the gospel we give people an opportunity to be saved and have their sins forgiven. However, when we fail to share the good news then we stop people from receiving forgiveness of sins. This is a responsibility which we have as Christians. Our calling is to promote the gospel and tell people that Christ died for their sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Through faith in the gospel men can receive forgiveness of sins.

John 20:24-29

The Lord spoke with one disciple by the name of Thomas. It is encouraging to me to see that the Lord took time to minister to one of his disciples who was stubborn. Thomas said he would not believe the testimony of the other disciples unless he could put his finger into the nail prints and his hand into the Lord's side.

When the Lord appeared to the disciples again Thomas was with them and Jesus challenged Thomas to do what he said. Put your finger in the nail prints and your hand into his side.

When Thomas met the Lord he declared that Jesus is Lord and God. The Lord gently rebuked Thomas. He said Thomas believed because he saw Jesus but blessed were those who did not see and yet believed. This would include us today. We have not seen and yet we believe the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

This passage taught us that God was willing to condescend to help people who struggled with their faith. The Old Testament account of Gideon was another good example of how God helped people overcome doubts and fears. Many times the Lord allowed Gideon to use various tests in order to confirm and strengthen his faith in the Lord.

For some people faith comes easily. When John saw the grave clothes of Jesus in the tomb he believed the Lord was risen. He had not seen the Lord yet but believed.

For others it required the Lord to take personal time with them in order for them to believe like Thomas.

It brings glory to God when we believe in him by faith. This reminds me of the scripture **Romans 4:20**, *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God"*.

The greatest thing you can do today is believe the gospel. Believe the testimony of the men who saw Jesus, spoke with him, lived with him, and were witnesses of his resurrection. Trust in God's word today. When you believe it brings glory to God.

John 20:30-31

John provided us with the purpose of this book. In this book he included examples of the miracles which Jesus did but he did not write everything. Not everything about the Lord was written in this book. We see variations of the same account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I think even with these four gospels there was still many things which the disciples experienced with the Lord Jesus which was not written down. Later John would tell us that the world could not contain the books which could be written about all that Jesus did in his life. The purpose of this book was to provide us with enough information that we can believe and receive eternal life by faith in Jesus.

Thinking about this last statement I realize this could be applied to the Bible as a whole. Why did God give us a book? It is so we could know enough about him in order to believe and receive eternal life. God chose to transmit the testimony of who he is through a book. God speaks. His words are recorded in a book. How else would he get his message to us? Why do people have a hard time believing that God would speak to us through a book?

The Lord speaks. He never says anything which contradicts what he said in the Bible. But he does speak. If you will seek the Lord you can find him. You can hear his voice. Jesus said his sheep hear his voice.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is God who came into this world as a man. He is fully God. He is fully man. He is the God Man. If anyone denies that Jesus Christ is God he does not know him. If anyone denies that Jesus Christ is a man he does not know him. Jesus is fully man. Jesus is fully God. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again on the third day. We have an account in this book of the events of his life, ministry, and sacrifice. God has done everything to provide us with forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. All he asked from us was to believe the testimony he provided. Believe and receive him today. Jesus is Lord.

John Chapter 21

John 21:1-14

The disciples returned to their fishing profession, for whatever reason. They were not yet completely focused on the mission the Lord gave them. He appeared yet again in a way which made it difficult for someone to identify him. However, they knew it was the Lord. They didn't ask him if he was the Lord. Why would they have to ask if he was the Lord? Obviously, something about him changed, which it made it difficult to identify him, but they knew who he was.

Once again, as it happened when Jesus first called them to be his disciples he blessed them with a large catch of fish. They brought the fish to shore and counted the number of fish they caught. They caught 153 fish.

Jesus made them breakfast and instructed them to bring the fish they caught to add to the meal. This was the third time Jesus showed himself to his disciples after he was risen from the dead.

These details like "third time" always stand out to me. Why were the fish counted? I'm sure there are spiritual meanings to these details but I don't know what they are.

We can see clearly how much the Lord Jesus cared for these men. They did not have a heart for the ministry Jesus called them to so the Lord still served them. He reminded them again through this miracle of catching these fish that he was their provider. We don't have to live for ourselves. We can work but never be deceived into believing that your purpose in life is a paycheck. The Lord gives us purpose and meaning and not our work. Jesus is our provider. He is the one who gives us health, and food, and money to live on. He provides us with what we need. God is our provider, and our protector, and our portion forever.

One personal application to take away from this account was how easy it was to return to what was familiar to them. It was easy to continue to live according to what was familiar to them. However, when the Lord calls them they could no longer live in any way which they chose. The Lord called them for a purpose, and he had a plan for their life. (**Jeremiah 29:11**). God has a calling on our life. He has a work and a ministry for us. We are exhorted to grab hold upon that for which the Lord grabbed hold upon us for.

Remember **Matthew 6:33**, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

Jesus proved he can provide for us. He can multiply fish and bread. He can create food, clothing, transportation, medical supplies, and any other thing we might need. The Lord is able to give us what we need. Let us surrender our life to him, trust in him, and focus on obeying his calling upon our lives.

John 21:15-19

After eating a meal the Lord Jesus had a conversation with Simon Peter. He asked Peter three times if he loved him. Why three times? In my opinion the Lord here asked him three times because Peter denied the Lord three times. Most people I've heard preach on this say the same thing, but it doesn't mean we actually know the reason the Lord asked Peter three times, *"Do you love me?"* Peter affirmed that he did love the Lord. The Lord Jesus then told Peter to feed his sheep. Peter was called by the Lord to minister to the church. He was called to feed the Lord's sheep. Peter referred back to this in his letter. **1 Peter 5:2**, *"Feed the flock of God which is among you..."*

What does this tell us about the character of God? He wants to forgive us, restore us, and reconcile us back to himself. Even when we fail the Lord we can return to him and we can humble ourselves, confess our sins, and ask the Lord to wash us clean. He promised that he would forgive us if we would confess our sins. (**1 John 1:9**).

Not only did the Lord Jesus restore Peter and put him back into the ministry, but he also told Peter that he would grow old and showed him the way he would die. Jesus signified what death Peter would glorify God. From church history we know Peter died as a martyr for the Lord Jesus Christ. They crucified Peter upside down on a cross.

We can see in the book of Acts and also by reading Peter's letters that he obeyed the Lord. He went on to be a leader in the early church, and no matter how hard people tried to capture him or kill him he survived for a long time, until he was an old man.

One detail which caught my attention was the phrase: "*signifying by what death he should glorify God.*" I wonder how often we give any thought to glorifying God in our death. This is something I have prayed about a few times in my life. Lord, let my living and my dying bring glory to your name. Amen. My hope is that the end of my life will bring honor and glory to God. He who began a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (**Philippians 1:6**).

John 21:20-25

In these final verses Peter asked the Lord about the apostle John. Notice how careful John was when writing this not to mention his own name, but he still wanted to make it clear who he was. Why did he avoid stating his own name so carefully? If you will take the time to study the word "name" in the Bible it is eye opening. Just by studying that word I came to understand one of the fundamental differences between the world system and the kingdom of God. The world system is built on the names of men. The name of man represents pride. The name of the Lord is the kingdom of God, and it is a kingdom where no man except Jesus Christ is exalted. No man there will be great except the one who humbled himself and served others with whatever gift God gave to him.

Jesus corrected Peter. Basically he asked Peter why it mattered to him what happened to John. Peter himself should focus on following the Lord. Isn't this a familiar human characteristic? We focus on how others serve God, but fail to pay attention to our own walk with the Lord. If we would focus more on our personal obedience and less on what others do we would be better off.

It is interesting here the amount of detail given in these final verses about how Peter and John would die. John said that Jesus did not say he would never die. Jesus only said that John would tarry until Jesus came again. This was what happened. John was an old man when the Lord Jesus came to him again and gave him the vision contained in the book of Revelation. Even as an old man, God still had a great work left for John to do. Never think you are too old to be of service to God. We can never be too old to serve God.

Psalm 48:14, "*For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*"

John completed his book by saying that there were a lot more things which Jesus did. However, if everything Jesus did was written down then even the world could not contain the books that should be written. I think that was a great way to complete this book.

There were a lot of books written about Jesus. Let me add these comments to the pile of what others have said before me. May this Bible commentary be a blessing and encouragement to all who take the time to read it. Amen.

Acts of the Apostles

Acts Chapter 1

Acts 1:1-5

John baptized men with water but the Lord Jesus Christ baptized men with the Holy Ghost. Why then do we put such emphasis on water baptism in church? Is this just a tradition of men or is it a genuine Christian ordinance? When I read scriptures like this it makes me wonder how important water baptism is in comparison with being baptized in the Holy Ghost.

Luke continued his record of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this book. The Lord died on the cross, he was buried, and now risen again. Luke began with the Lord's final instructions to his disciples before he ascended back to his Father.

Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples with verifiable proof. He told Thomas to put his fingers in his nail prints and his hand into his side. The Lord ate fish and honeycomb with his disciples. He had breakfast with them beside the sea of Tiberias. The Lord spent 40 days with them after his resurrection before he went back to heaven.

Jesus talked to them about the kingdom of God. He gave them specific instructions to assemble in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father, which was the Holy Ghost. Keep in mind the promise of the Father which Jesus mentioned was the Holy Ghost. God's promise to those who believe in Jesus was the Holy Ghost. This was the Father's promise: he would give us the Holy Ghost. The Lord Jesus baptized us in the Holy Ghost. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. It is the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit of the Spirit. (**Galatians 5:22-23**). He produces the life of God within us and enables us to be a witness for him in this world and to live for Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the one who applies the finished, completed work of Christ to the believer. He enables us to live for God.

Two items to remember from these verses. The Holy Ghost was the promise of the Father. Men can baptize you with water but only Jesus can baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:6-11

The Lord's disciples wanted to know when God would restore the kingdom to Israel. Why did they ask this question? The Old Testament prophets of Israel said this would happen. And it will happen. When Jesus comes back at the second coming and establishes his kingdom over the planet then at that time the nation of Israel will once again hold a prominent place on earth. God's promises to the nation of Israel will be completely fulfilled just as the prophets said. All scripture will be fulfilled. However, when the disciples asked Jesus this question it was not yet the right time.

Jesus redirected their attention to what would happen to them next. The next item on the calendar was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Lord charged them with the mission of spreading the gospel all over the world, beginning at Jerusalem, and spreading out from there to Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth. Read the book of Acts carefully and you see this was the pattern of how the gospel spread. It started in Jerusalem and traveled from there, through Samaria, and is still to this day spreading to every nation. In a sense, the book of Acts never ended. It is still

happening today. We still wait for Jesus to come back and establish his kingdom on earth. We still wait for Israel to receive the fulfillment of God's promise to her. This day is fast approaching.

After Jesus said this he ascended into heaven on a cloud. The disciples watched him as he ascended into heaven. What would it have been like to see Jesus going up in the clouds? We may never know but we will know what it will be like to see him return in the same manner.

Angels who appeared told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner he left. One day Jesus will return on the clouds and set foot on this planet again. This is what every born again Christian looks forward to. This is why we pray "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*"

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. He ascended back to the Father, and is now at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. He saves to the utmost anyone who comes to God by him because he lives forever and intercedes for us. Call on his name today. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Acts 1:12-26

Following the Lord's instructions the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Perhaps they didn't quite understand what was next but they knew enough about the Lord that they obeyed what he said. I've found this works the best for me. Just obey the Lord and maybe you understand later on. This is walking by faith rather than sight.

All the disciples, including the Lord's family, gathered and prayed together. There were about 120 disciples gathered in one accord.

Peter took a leadership role and brought up the problem caused by the betrayal of Judas. They understood what happened in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled scripture. Even what Judas did was foretold by Israel's prophets.

Peter pointed out the need for another man to take the place of Judas. They needed 12 apostles, and so decided to ask the Lord to add another apostle to the group. This man had to be a witness of the Lord's resurrection and someone who was with the group from the beginning during the time of John's baptism. The qualifications for becoming one of the 12 apostles, therefore, were personal experience with the life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They prayed and cast lots to see who would be the new apostle. This might sound strange to us but it was a tradition they understood from their Jewish background. The Jewish priest relied upon a similar method of determining God's will using a Urim and Thummim. The lot fell to Matthias to be counted as one of the 12 apostles.

There is a reason the Lord chose 12 apostles. Perhaps it was because there were 12 tribes in Israel. I don't know the meaning of the number 12 but this was important to them. Notice how the Bible gives close attention to details such as counting people and items. Even in the New Testament when Jesus fed the multitudes we know exactly how many fish and loaves of bread he started with, how many baskets of scraps were left over, and how many people were fed. This pattern of counting in the Bible is something to consider about the character of God.

We will give an account one day of our lives to the Lord. God notices every single detail about our lives. He loves us so much he counts every hair on our head. He knows every word we will speak while it is still on our tongue. How much do you think God knows about your life? He knows everything. He knows every word you spoke, and every thought you had. Yet he loves you and sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for you upon the cross. Are you ready to trust in him today? Are you ready to allow Jesus to be your Lord and Savior today?

Acts Chapter 2

Acts 2:1-13

Church denominations have parted ways over the content of this Bible chapter. There are entire groups of Christians who define their churches based on the verses in this section of scripture. One thing we all have in common, no matter what denomination we belong to, is that none of us would be here today without the events described here. This was the promise of the Father, and the promise of Jesus. This was the evidence that Jesus had returned to the Father. He sent the Holy Spirit. We have a clear description of what the disciples experienced on the day of Pentecost.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon these disciples was accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders. They were able to hear the sound from heaven of a rushing mighty wind. They saw cloven tongues like fire which came down and sat upon them. No matter how you read these Bible verses you cannot separate the supernatural element from this. Men try hard to remove the supernatural from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, even if you do not believe tongues are for today you still have to admit that speaking in tongues accompanied the baptism of the Holy Spirit for these believers.

I won't go much into the controversy between tongue talkers and those who do not except to say I know the Holy Spirit is real. Speaking in tongues is real today. We cannot separate the supernatural from God. God works in ways we do not understand. He is the creator of the universe. If he wants to enable a man to speak in tongues why should we stand against that man? Are we so sure we understand everything about God and how he works in the lives of men?

I won't debate about this. I rejoice in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was the beginning of the church. This is when the church was born and empowered to be witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

May we be filled again today with a fresh outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:14-36

Again, we see Peter took a leadership role in the early church. On the day the church was born the apostle Peter, along with the other apostles, stood up and declared the gospel to the people gathered.

Peter addressed the men of Judea, and everyone in Jerusalem, and corrected their accusation that those baptized in the Holy Spirit were drunk. He told them that what they heard and saw was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The prophet Joel foretold God would pour out his Holy Spirit upon his people. Sons and daughters would prophesy. Young men would see visions. Old men would dream dreams. God poured out his Spirit upon his servants and they did prophesy. This was the true description of what happened. Men and women were baptized in the Holy Ghost, spoke in tongues, and prophesied.

Notice that the purpose of this experience was to bring people to salvation. He says in verse 21, "... whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved..." The purpose in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. God wanted people to be saved. The only way to be saved is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and trust in his completed work upon Calvary.

Peter went on to lay out the gospel message. Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Peter quoted Bible prophecy from the Old Testament to prove what happened was God's plan. Yes, evil men killed Jesus. What men intended for evil, God intended for good, to bring about salvation, not only for Israel, but also for the whole world. This reminds me of the account of Joseph in Genesis.

Peter concluded his sermon by telling everyone in Israel that Jesus Christ, who they crucified, but whom God raised from the dead was indeed their Messiah.

Today is the day of salvation. Listen to the words of the apostle Peter and call upon the name of the Lord so that you can be saved.

Acts 2:37-41

The promise was the Holy Spirit. Pay careful attention to what Peter said about this promise. This promise was unto you (Israel), unto your children (Israel), and to "all that are afar off" (Gentiles), even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Who is this? This is us today. This is one of the strongest verses I can find to support the belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for Christians today.

If you are a Christian then you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. If you are not baptized in the Holy Spirit then you are not a Christian.

Do I mean that every Christian should speak in tongues? Obviously, that is not the case. There are many Christians who do not speak in tongues, and even believe that speaking in tongues is not for today, yet they still love Jesus. They are filled with the Holy Spirit but do not speak in tongues.

How can you know you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Paul lists for us the fruit of the Holy Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit then you will bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

In the context of the book of Acts when you see men baptized in the Holy Spirit you also see supernatural miracles. The book of Acts does not separate faith, salvation, preaching, and miracles. It is all together in the same context. Is it today? Some would prefer that we leave out the supernatural aspect today but it is still there in the Bible.

The people who heard Peter preaching were convicted by the Holy Spirit. They realized they were guilty and were immediately alarmed and wanted to know what they could do to correct their sins. Peter told them to repent, be baptized, and believe in Jesus. As a result, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember, in the context, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was a supernatural miracle. It was not men making intellectual agreement to Bible doctrines. There was a supernatural change in the heart of men. Men became new creations in Christ Jesus. They were born again by the

Holy Spirit. Some received the gift of speaking in tongues. Some received other spiritual gifts as we shall see later on in Paul's letters to the churches.

As a result of this one sermon three thousand people were saved and added to the church. There is no doubt this was a miracle from God and a true spiritual revival in the household of faith.

Call upon the name of the Lord today and be saved.

Acts 2:42-47

The Lord added people to the church daily. This is good to underline and remember. It is not special programs or outreaches which add people to the church. It is the Lord who adds people to his church. Men try hard to build their church numbers but it is the Lord who adds to the church. It is not up to us but it is up to the Lord. Our calling is to preach the gospel.

What is the apostles' doctrine? I think this is simply the gospel message of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said he preached Christ and him crucified. It is important to keep the message simple so that people can be saved. When we add in a lot of other things it is easy to lose focus of what is most important. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

I've heard some preachers say it was not wise for these early Christians to sell all their goods. The reason preachers think this way is because this looks a lot like communism. However, we cannot compare the church with a political ideology. The church and government are two completely separate things. I don't think the early Christians were wrong in putting their material resources together to help one another. I think this is exactly what they were supposed to do. People don't do this today because they are selfish and do not trust brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone is independent and thinks he has to look out for number one (self). This is an American mindset that is hard to overcome as a Christian.

Christians live in community and not just on Sunday mornings. We have a watered down Christianity in America where people show up on a certain day of the week, go to a building where they smile and shake hands, and sit through an hour long sermon. This is weak Christianity. Real Christianity is people living together and helping one another in every aspect of life and not just on Sunday morning.

Also, remember you cannot separate the supernatural from the church. There were miracles taking place in the early church. People had the fear of God in their lives. They knew the Lord was real, he was present, and he listened and saw everything happening in their midst. The Lord walked among them and they felt his presence. Do we feel God's presence today? If not, why? Is it because we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ?

1 John 3:17, *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"*

Acts Chapter 3

Acts 3:1-9

Peter and John continued to go to the temple for prayer time. Not long after these events the religious institution would throw them out, but Peter and John were not trying to create a new religious system. What happened with the church was the work of the Holy Spirit, and it was not the work of men trying to create a new religion.

This was an example of a miracle from God. The Lord worked through Peter and John to heal the lame man. The man was lame from birth, and well known by the people going in and out of the temple area. He begged for money every day. Peter and John gave him something better than money. By the name of the Lord Jesus the man was healed. His healing was so dramatic that he immediately jumped to his feet, leaped up, and began to walk. He praised God and attracted a lot of attention.

Underline the part where Peter said he had no money. Peter had no silver or gold. Think about this for a minute and compare this description of the apostles to modern day preachers. Do you see a discrepancy between the apostles and preachers today? Do not be deceived by the American prosperity gospel. It is a false gospel which leads men into covetousness and idolatry.

Many times people think money is the answer, but God may have a better solution for us than what we can think of. The Lord may do something out of the ordinary in our lives which does not involve the method of provision through the world system.

This man was healed immediately. It was plain to everyone a miracle occurred and there was no explanation except God. The man healed knew it was God. He praised God for healing him.

Does God heal today? If a man asks this question he probably is under the spell of man-made systematic theology. If it is in the Bible then why would it not be for men today? Why did God give us the Bible if not for hope and faith and an example of what God can do to inspire our faith in him? Believe in God! Have faith in God! If you can believe then all things are possible.

Acts 3:11-26

After God healed the lame man a crowd gathered. Peter took the opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's outline some of what Peter preached to them.

First, he made it clear the miracle did not happen because there was anything special about Peter or John. Peter denied the miracle happened because of his personal holiness or because he had special virtue. Instead, the miracle was a result of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter preached to Israel so he used the Hebrew scripture. He explained that the Lord Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of what the Bible said about the Messiah, the Son of God.

He said Israel crucified their Messiah and was led to this by the religious leaders. He acknowledged they did it in ignorance but were still accountable for their sins by God. The only hope for forgiveness is repentance of sins and faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter told them Jesus Christ is now in heaven but will return at a specific time in the future which he described as "the times of restitution of all things". There is a time when Jesus will return to earth and everything will be put right. There will be a great restoration of humanity and earth.

Peter pointed out that Moses spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said a prophet like himself would come to Israel. This prophet Moses spoke about was indeed the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter reminded them of the warning Moses gave about this prophet. If they would not listen to this prophet they would be cut off from their people. Everyone who rejects Jesus Christ has no part in God's kingdom or plan.

The Lord came to Israel first. He came to his own people first to bless them in turning them away from their sins and to faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts Chapter 4

Acts 4:1-12

Peter and John minded their own business. They went to the temple at prayer time and saw this lame man. Filled with compassion and with faith and with the knowledge the Lord Jesus Christ could help this man they spoke to him the word of life and restoration. Immediately by God's power the man was made whole. A crowd of people gathered to witness the miracle. Peter took the opportunity to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people believed the message. The attention of the religious leaders and temple security were alerted. They arrested the apostles.

The religious leaders did not believe in the resurrection. When they heard Peter preached Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead they were outraged. This madness led them to arrest the apostles and put them in jail until the next day. This happened in the evening so they waited for daylight hours to process them. This was a courtesy not given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next day Peter boldly proclaimed the gospel. This was the fulfillment of the Lord's word that his disciples would be persecuted and brought before leaders to give testimony. Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost and preached to them the simple and amazing message of Jesus Christ.

Peter said they should know that it was not them who healed the man. The healing happened by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This Jesus was the same Jesus they crucified but whom God raised from the dead. Read **verse 12** again: "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" This is a verse we should underline in our Bible and memorize. This is one of the bedrock truths of being a Christian. The Lord Jesus is exclusive. There is no other way to know God except through Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be saved from hell, no other way to be saved from our sins, no other way to be forgiven, no other way to be delivered from the devil. Jesus Christ is Lord. There is no other.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts 4:13-22

This is not the first time the religious leaders found themselves in this kind of situation. In John's gospel account Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath day, and the healed man received a trial similar to this one with Peter and John. The religious leaders constantly grappled with new experiences of the living God. All they had was a system of religion void of spiritual power. Now they were confronted with uneducated men who spent time with Jesus. They did not know how to handle it.

The religious leaders were intimidated by the people who praised God. Everyone knew this was a genuine miracle and could not be denied. The man who was healed was over forty years old and lame since birth. No one could deny the miracle.

However, they insisted that Peter and John could no longer preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Peter and John replied with a simple statement. They told the religious leaders to judge themselves whether or not they should obey God or them. The religious leaders were no longer leading men to the living God. What are men supposed to do when religious leaders are no longer on God's side? What do we do?

Peter and John told them they could only speak about what they saw and heard. The religious leaders threatened them. But what could they really do to Peter and John? They could not find any way (at that time) to punish them, because of the crowd of people. Note, religious leaders get their power from numbers of people they seduce to come underneath their system or name.

No one could deny God did this miracle. Peter and John told them the miracle was done through the only name by which men can be saved. This name is the name above all names: the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:23-31

After Peter and John were released they returned to the other disciples and reported everything that happened. How did they respond to the threats of the religious leaders? They prayed to God to continue to use them to preach the gospel. They quoted Bible prophecy from **Psalms 2** about the leaders of the world opposing the Son of God. This is important how they took scripture into their prayer and used this as a basis upon which to appeal to God. They prayed according to God's will, in God's way, and with God's word. What happened as a result of their prayers? The place was shaken where they were assembled and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke God's word with boldness.

The gospel is opposed by the world and by leaders of dead and false religion. The enemy will threaten and try to forbid the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What should our response be? Should we protest at city hall or the state capitol? No! What did these Christians do? They prayed to God and were baptized in the Holy Ghost. They continued to preach the gospel with boldness.

The prophecy about the world's opposition to the Lord Jesus was from **Psalms 2**. This shows us a pattern of how the world operates against God and the one whom God placed in charge. God made his

son Jesus Christ Lord of all. Jesus is King over all the nations of the world. The powers of the world system always resist the Lord. They are opposed to the authority of God. Ultimately they fail just like the religious and political leaders who opposed the early church failed. Those who oppose the church always fall eventually. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of the Lord Jesus.

How do we receive power to preach God's word? We need to pray and be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to preach the gospel. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. All of our efforts are in vain if we work in our own strength or willpower. The only thing that lasts is the work of the Holy Spirit through us. *It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6).*

As Christians we understand the world system is set against us. We don't fight against the world system, but instead humble ourselves and pray for strength to preach the gospel. Our response to the world's evil is not protest but it is seeking the Lord for power to preach the gospel without compromise.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. The gospel is simple. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures. **(1 Corinthians 15:1-4)**. Preach this gospel, and lift up the name of Jesus Christ, and see what the Lord will do to save souls.

Acts 4:32-37

The early Christian church did not believe in any political ideology such as communism. On the surface their actions may appear to be communism but was actually a spontaneous movement of God's people to support the ministry and take care of brothers and sisters in Christ. Communism does not work because those who claim to redistribute the wealth do not love Jesus and they do not love their comrades. It is not love that controls them but cold ideology.

In the case of the early church there was a practical expression of God's love demonstrated through believers who helped one another. They provided for the practical needs of one another. This could never be implemented as a government system in the world because this kind of communal living required agreement in their faith in Jesus and their love for one another. You won't get this in the governments of the world. I do believe one day we will see something like this during the reign of Christ upon the earth after his return to the planet.

The book of James provides practical instruction on how faith should be accompanied by practical works. Faith needs to be coupled with practical actions of helping people.

It is easy for people to get confused. Some organizations exist completely to do good works but have nothing to do with the gospel, even organizations which were started by Christians (and most of them probably were at some point). Others, like many local churches, are only concerned with teaching but have no practical expression of good works to go with this. A well rounded church contains a proclamation of the gospel accompanied by practical help.

Ephesians 2:10, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

Let's also remember the exhortation from Paul in **Galatians 6:10**, *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

Acts Chapter 5

Acts 5:1-11

These two were slain by the Holy Spirit but they were not Pentecostal. I doubt these two were even Christians. The reason I doubt they were saved is because this scripture said that *"Satan filled thine heart"*. The devil filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira. We can speculate as to why they did this. They saw people selling property and giving it to the church. Perhaps they thought this would gain them position within this group of Christians. They wanted prestige or position within the church. Why else would they do this?

It did not end well for these two. They attempted to lie to the Holy Spirit, and were both slain by the Holy Spirit. Peter did not kill these people. They were destroyed by the Lord himself. Why did such drastic measures take place? Remember, this was the beginning of the church. The Lord walked among these people. Remember how the Lord walked among Israel when they left Egypt? How many times did people die in the desert because of unbelief, or doubt, or rebellion? Unbelief is sin. Unbelief leads to sin. Sin always brings death. Sometimes death is sudden. Sometimes it comes later. But sin always brings death. The wages of sin is death.

The Lord gives us life. He gives us an opportunity to repent of sins and put our faith in him. These two had an opportunity to tell the truth but continued to lie. All liars have their part in the lake of fire. The Lord will not allow any liar among his people. Everyone who is fake, or phony, or who thinks he can live among God's people for a position will discover he made a mistake.

Revelation 21:8, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

Repent and believe the gospel. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts 5:12-16

In this section we get a glimpse of the church walking in the authority of God's kingdom. Peter is mentioned, but he symbolized the work of the Holy Spirit through all of the apostles and the disciples. We see later miracles also happened by the hands of lowly deacons such as Stephen, so this was not only the Apostle Peter. He was mentioned as a sample representative of what happened in the entire church.

What happened in the church? Signs and wonders took place. People today are skeptical or afraid of miracles because of false teachers who do miracles. Yes, there are many false teachers who do signs by the power of Satan. This does not cancel out the God sent men who walk in God's authority. What better way to get the church to neglect the gifts of the Holy Spirit but by scaring them away from experiencing the living God. I'm afraid of false teachers but I'm also afraid of sincere Christians who cut people off from experiencing the supernatural power of God. Both are extremes and both deprive the church of God's presence. One is as bad as the other.

Many miracles happened among the people. They were in agreement and met at a place called Solomon's porch. These people made use of areas which belonged to the temple. A true revival took place under the nose of dead religion. Just as the enemy likes to invade the church with false teachers, so the Lord likes to invade dead churches with prophets and apostles. The Lord's work is carried out. It is not the Lord's will for men to perish in their sins but for everyone to repent and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Men and women were saved on a daily basis. There was no distinction made between rich and poor, male and female, or between Jew and Gentile. People were saved all over the place, and continued to go forward despite opposition from organized religion and secular authorities.

Another thing which happened was that people were healed. People brought the sick into the streets so the shadow of an apostle might pass over them. People had faith in the Lord Jesus and knew he could heal them. They heard the news, they saw what happened, and people believed. People were healed and evil spirits cast out. The works of the devil were destroyed by the church.

May the Lord send revival again so that the poor may hear the gospel, the sick will be healed, and the work of the devil destroyed.

Acts 5:17-23

God blessed the church. People were saved, needs were met, many were healed, and the devil was cast out of people. Don't think, however, the enemy will leave the work of God unanswered.

The religious leaders arrested the apostles. They were put in a common prison. Again, they were put in jail overnight, but this time the Lord did not leave them overnight. He sent an angel to break the apostles out of jail. The angel told them to go back to the temple and keep preaching the gospel.

The next day court was convened. When they sent for the prisoners they were gone. What happened? No doubt this was a new scenario for the religious leaders. Did they stop and think maybe they opposed the work of God? Not likely. Instead, they would double down on their opposition.

Sometimes people were left in jail and sometimes God got them out of jail. This is not the only time God brought people out of jail like this. There was another account where an angel broke Peter out of jail. John the Baptist was left to die in jail. Why? These are questions the Bible does not answer. We cannot answer. God is over all. We trust in God's love and wisdom.

After their arrest and escape the Lord sent them right back to work. God wants us to be steadfast and faithful and not give up the work he gave us. We keep sharing God's word no matter what. No matter what we suffer or endure this is the most important thing we can do with our lives. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We are his witnesses. Keep preaching the word. Don't give up.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Acts 5:24-32

If the religious leaders thought they had a problem when it was only Jesus healing and preaching then they never imagined the problem they now faced. Jesus was multiplied exponentially through these men who preached the gospel. The same thing Jesus did these men did. Signs, wonders, miracles, healing, devils cast out, the gospel preached to the poor. The more the religious leaders fought Jesus and his followers the more the gospel was magnified and the more people were saved.

This situation for the religious leaders: "...*they doubted of them where unto this would grow...*" They had no idea what they were dealing with and what would happen next. Men were broke out of jail with no trace. Healing happened in the streets. Demons were sent packing.

The religious leaders made an interesting statement: "...*ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us...*" But isn't this what they requested? "*Let his blood be upon us and our children?*" Didn't they agree to take responsibility for killing Jesus? Now, they reaped what they sowed. If they had humbled their heart and believed the good news then they would be saved. But they couldn't do that. Why? Because they would lose their prestige, power, and position. They would not let go of their power even though it was obvious their power was taken from them by God.

What did the apostles say when these religious leaders tried to forbid them from preaching the gospel? "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" Is there ever a time when we need to disobey the leaders over us? The only time when we can do this is when religious freedom is taken away or if the government asks us to commit sin. Otherwise, the Christian attitude should always be humility, submission, and obedience. The only time we can disobey is when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ or if those over us try to force us to sin. That is the only time when we disobey.

The early church was clearly in a position where they had to disregard the command of the religious leaders. The leaders of their community were now actively fighting against God by their attempt to stamp out the church.

Peter and the apostles used this trial as another opportunity to preach the gospel! They were still preaching the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ even in their testimony in this trial. They were a witness of the Lord Jesus and so was the Holy Ghost whom God gave to those who obeyed him.

Acts 5:33-41

When the apostles said they were on God's side and the Holy Ghost was given to them the religious leaders were infuriated. They were so angry they wanted to kill the apostles.

However, one man rose up among the religious leaders and cautioned them. The adviser was Gamaliel. From his speech we get another reason why the apostles of the Lord infuriated the religious leaders. The apostles gained a huge following of people. You can see this in Gamaliel's speech because he used examples of past uprisings when men gained a large following. He pointed out to them that all of these past uprisings came to nothing. Then he said something interesting which makes me wonder what he knew about the apostles. He said, "*But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found*

even to fight against God." How did he know this? Was he simply looking at all sides or did he believe in the Lord Jesus secretly?

The religious leaders were restrained from carrying out their murderous plans. Instead, they beat the apostles, forbade them to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

How did the apostles take this treatment? They rejoiced that they were found worthy of the Lord to suffer shame for his name! How remarkable is this way of thinking! They thought like this because they loved Jesus more than anything in the world. They loved him more than their own lives. To them, suffering for Jesus was an honor and a privilege. Is it for us today? Do we consider suffering for the sake of Christ an honor and a privilege? This should cause us to search our hearts and ask God to set us free from self-love and from the love of this current world system.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, he rose again on the third day. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved.

Acts Chapter 6

Acts 6:1-7

The early church faced persecution from the outside. The religious leaders persecuted the church, and individuals tried to infiltrate the church to gain position in the church by making big donations. Trouble came from within the church and among the people who were part of the church. The church grew and along with church growth came growing pains.

There was a complaint among the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministry. Here was a common tactic of the enemy. He tried to separate people along ethnic lines. This is an attack vector of the devil, and if we are conscious of this then we should seek to confront this with love, grace, forgiveness, and compassion.

The apostles were unable to take care of all these problems. Just like Moses was unable to judge all the people of Israel but needed help so the apostles found themselves needing brothers to come alongside them to help. God gave each man in the church a specific gift which he should use to serve others. The apostles instructed the disciples in the church to find seven men who were honest and full of the Holy Ghost. These seven were appointed as deacons to serve tables and take care of the widows. This plan was agreeable to everyone and so they chose seven men. Among them was Stephen who soon became the first martyr in the church.

The deacons took care of the ministry and the apostles continued to teach and preach the word. Multitudes continued to get saved and some who were saved were former priests.

Just like the early church we face problems today from without and from within. We should ask God for wisdom to know how to focus on priorities (God's word and prayer), while not letting other tasks go undone. The church was not a small group of elite men but it was all the members working together for the glory of God. When we read **Romans 12** we see the church is a body with many members. Peter compared the church to a temple of stones built together. We belong to one another. We work together. We cannot succeed unless we are united. Our unity must be in the truth of the gospel and the Lord Jesus

Christ. He is our agreement and he is our unity. When we as individuals agree with the Lord Jesus then we are united and made one in him.

Acts 6:8-15

One of the seven deacons was Stephen. This man was full of the Holy Ghost and had great faith. God used him to do miracles among the people. This was an example of how a common man in the church was used by God and known for signs in his ministry. He was a deacon in the church and zealous for the Lord Jesus. He spoke boldly for the Lord and attracted the attention of the religious leaders. Those who tried to dispute with him could not resist the Holy Spirit's wisdom. The Lord gives the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Since the religious leaders could not win an argument they decided to just kill him. They hired false witnesses to testify against him. Their lies were the same lies told about Jesus. They said he blasphemed and spoke against Moses and that place. As we shall see in his testimony Stephen probably knew more about Moses than all of them. He was not against Moses. He loved the one to whom Moses pointed: the Lord Jesus Christ.

An interesting description of Stephen was provided here. His face looked like an angel. What does that mean? He had a look of heaven on him. He was a man on whom the hand of God rested. It was obvious that Stephen was a man of God, and this trial was a lie and nothing but another way the Jews persecuted the church.

Stephen's story occupied a lot of space in the book of Acts. God remembers those who gave their life for him. Those who die as a witness for Jesus like this receive a special crown from the Lord. The Lord rewards those who persevere until the end. He loved not his life unto death. (**Revelation 12:11**).

Again, we see what Jesus said fulfilled. Jesus said his disciples would suffer. He said they would be brought before courts. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would give his servants wisdom that could not be resisted. This is the wisdom given to Stephen. Jesus said his disciples would be persecuted by people who thought they did God service. This is what happened. These men accused Stephen of blasphemy but they were the ones fighting God. Stephen was a faithful witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to prepare to give an answer for the hope we have in Jesus Christ. We need to study the word, think about our faith, and let the truth of Jesus sink deep in our spirit. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts Chapter 7

Acts 7:1-8

Stephen was arrested and brought before the religious court on false charges of blasphemy. He was allowed to defend himself. Rather than defending himself he preached the word and began his sermon with Abraham.

He recounted how God appeared to Abraham and told him to leave his own country and go to a land which God would show him. Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and traveled to Canaan. While

Abraham was alive he never inherited the land but God promised it to his descendants. He said his descendants would inherit the land.

God gave him this promise when Abraham did not yet have a son. He had no son but God promised him his descendants would inherit Canaan. The Lord showed Abraham his descendants would be in bondage four hundred years, and then God would judge the nation that held them in bondage. God would bring them out and they would return to the land. God gave Abraham a sign of the covenant he made with him. The sign of the land covenant was circumcision. Abraham had a son named Isaac who had a son named Jacob and Jacob had twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

This was the beginning of Stephen's address to the religious court. Why did Stephen recount history? One reason might be that he proved the accusations against him were false. He was not a blasphemer. He believed the same promises his brethren believed. Yet he also believed the promise God made to Eve that she would have a son who would bruise the head of the serpent. Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman. Stephen knew the truth and he used scripture everyone knew and understood to demonstrate this. He was not against them. He was on their side and on the side of history and their opposition of Jesus Christ was opposition against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Here is a Bible verse I always remember about Abraham. **Romans 4:20**, *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;"*

When we believe the gospel, the testimony of God about his Son Jesus, then we bring glory to God.

Acts 7:9-14

Stephen continued his sermon to the religious court. He described how the patriarchs betrayed their brother Joseph and sold him into slavery. God was with Joseph, though, and gave him favor and wisdom in Egypt. He rose from a prison cell to be the prince of Egypt and provided salvation for Egypt during a time of great famine. Not only did he save Egypt, but his family also came to him for food. Joseph moved his family to Egypt, and this fulfilled what God said to Abraham about his descendants being strangers in another nation for 400 years.

What did it take for God to move these twelve sons of Jacob into Egypt? It took years of suffering for Joseph. It took a worldwide famine where countless people suffered. And from the perspective of the Bible all this was to accomplish God's plan in bringing Israel into Egypt.

Sometimes we wonder why God allows suffering in the world. It is rare that we stop and consider that God has a great plan that he is accomplishing, and that he is able to use worldwide suffering in order to put his plan into motion and accomplish his purpose. God allowed suffering for his people, and for all the world, in order to accomplish a greater purpose of redemption and salvation. Is not every plague and famine allowed by God? It will accomplish God's purpose for which he allows it.

There is no greater demonstration of this than Calvary. At Calvary we see the greatest evil of mankind, and also we see the greatest demonstration of God's love, mercy, and grace for us. What men intended for evil God intended for good to bring about a great salvation. This is the story behind the account of Joseph. God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. (**Romans 8:28**).

Give thanks in all things! God is in control. He will accomplish his purpose in our lives and his plan will be fulfilled. Trust in his goodness, trust in his love, trust in his faithfulness.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved.

Acts 7:15-19

Stephen continued his sermon with the history of Israel in Egypt. This same account can be found starting in **Exodus chapter 1**.

After Israel moved to Egypt they continued to multiply. Joseph and his generation died and a new generation in Egypt arose which did not remember Joseph. A new Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph and he oppressed Israel with slave labor.

There was a specific time when God would fulfill his promise to Israel. This was according to the timeline God gave to Abraham. When the time of God's promise drew near Israel multiplied rapidly. This was one reason why Egypt dreaded the Hebrew people. They grew quickly and Pharaoh was afraid they would take over.

The devil's plan to stop Israel from becoming a nation was to kill the male babies. Killing children is a scheme of the devil. This is a plan the enemy uses today through abortion, euthanasia, and apathy toward the elderly.

There was a set time frame for these events to occur. The Lord would not allow his people to suffer forever. There was a season for the Hebrew people to suffer in Egypt. This season would not last forever.

The more they suffered the more they multiplied. We see this also in the early church and through history. When the church was persecuted they multiplied. Open persecution of God's people always had the opposite result of what the enemy intended. Oppression and persecution of God's people caused them to spread the word and bring more people to faith in Jesus. The more Israel was oppressed the more they multiplied. Pharaoh could not stop God's plan, and neither will Satan stop God's plan for the church in the last days.

Remember God's people were always hated by the world. Whether it be Israel or the church the Lord's people were always hated, persecuted, and killed by the world system. Why do Christians want to be friends with the world? They do not remember their history. Christians cannot be friends with the world or with apostate religious systems which pretend to be the church. True Christians were oppressed in the false religious system and driven out. Just as Israel was driven out of Egypt so also Christians who love Jesus with all their heart are cast out of the worldly religious system.

Do you feel oppressed by organized religious systems? Do you dread entering their buildings and sitting under their religious leaders every Sunday (or Saturday)? Perhaps the Lord is leading you out of religious Egypt into a new place where you can be fruitful and productive in God's kingdom.

Last thought: abortion is of the devil. Killing babies was inspired by Satan and those who participate in it will be judged by God just like God judged Egypt.

Humble yourselves, repent, and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts 7:20-22

During this time of great distress for Israel their deliverer was born. He was cast out into the river like other babies, but he was rescued by an Egyptian princess. Going into the water and being brought up out of water is a picture of salvation. We are baptized into the Lord Jesus. Water baptism is a symbol of being buried with Christ and being raised together with him. Moses went into the water and he was brought out of the water into new life. The name of Moses was given to him by the Egyptians and means to be brought up out of the water.

This picture of baptism is repeated again in Moses' life when the nation of Israel went into the Red Sea and came out the other side into a new life. They were saved through the water.

This is the picture we see with Noah and the ark. We see this when Israel crossed the Jordan River under Joshua. This is the picture we see in the New Testament when John baptized men in the Jordan River.

God used this picture to remind us that the way to new life is dying to the old life. We cannot go back to the life we had before we were born again. We have a new life in Christ. Old things have passed away. All things have become new.

Moses received an education while he grew up in the house of Pharaoh. Like the apostle Paul Moses did not hold on to the life of worldly power, but he left it behind in order to be part of God's humble people. All of the education of Egypt could not compare with the fellowship of the saints. He left his old life to begin the new life. He had to be dead to Egypt in order to live with God's people.

People today seek knowledge in the world but it is in fellowship with God's people we find true wisdom and knowledge. The Lord Jesus is our wisdom and our knowledge. In him is all wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the true beginning of wisdom and knowledge.

An education can be a good thing, and there are benefits to having an education, but nothing can compare with knowing the Lord Jesus. In Christ we have all we need for life and godliness. Paul said he counted all of his past achievements in education and religion as dung compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord.

Do you know him? Have you found the Lord Jesus to be wisdom and knowledge in your life? Begin today by humbling your heart, and putting your entire faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that we may live with him.

Acts 7:23-29

Stephen recounts that when Moses was forty years old he went to see his people. Perhaps he felt God's call on his life. However, as is often the case, when he felt God's call on his life he went about to do God's will in his own strength and wisdom.

When Moses visited his people he saw one of the Hebrews mistreated by an Egyptian. In retaliation Moses killed the Egyptian. Moses assumed the Hebrews would understand he was sent to be their deliverer but they did not understand.

The next day Moses attempted to come between two Hebrews who were arguing but they rejected his intervention. One of them asked Moses if he would kill him as he had killed the Egyptian. When Moses heard this he realized he was discovered and so he fled. He went to the land of Midian where he married a woman and had two sons.

Moses would become the deliverer of God's people, but he attempted to do this in his own strength what only God could accomplish. As a result, Moses' actions led to the death of one man and a rebuke from others. By attempting to perform God's will in his own strength Moses only brought suffering upon other people and also put himself in a dangerous position. This shows us how important it is to always wait upon the Lord and allow the Lord's work to be done in the Lord's way and also in the Lord's time.

Worldly education did not lend itself to giving Moses spiritual wisdom. Moses only knew carnal power and worldly intellectualism at this point in his life. We see the results of carnal power and the wisdom of the world. It leads to death, suffering, and being put on the back burner. In the beginning Moses was brave enough to confront and kill a man. But now he was running for his life. This is what happens when men of God strive to do God's will in their own strength or carnal power.

Bravado gets people killed. I see this so clearly in the church right now with this current plague and crisis. It is so important to stick with scripture, and wait upon the Lord, and humble ourselves. Our response should not be protesting, or taking political action. Our response should be humility, and prayer, and asking God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. We need God's wisdom so that we can do God's will, in God's way, and in God's timing.

Moses was rejected by his own people. This is a type of Christ. The Lord Jesus came to his own people but they did not receive him or understand that he was their deliverer. He came to his own but his own people did not receive him.

We can humble ourselves now, and receive the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He is our deliverer. He delivered us from self, sin, the world, and Satan when he died upon the cross. He was buried in a tomb and he rose from the dead on the third day. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus today and be saved.

Acts 7:30-38

Stephen told the account of how God called Moses to serve him. God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. He called him to go back to Egypt and rescue the nation of Israel.

It was not Moses who rescued Israel but it was the Lord. However, the Lord used Moses as his spokesman. Moses was used by God for forty years in the wilderness with Israel. He was God's representative to Israel. The Lord used Moses to teach the people who God is and the name of the Lord and the words of God.

One thing Stephen underlines is the prophecy about how God would raise up a prophet for Israel who would be like Moses. This prophecy points forward to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Moses was a shadow of the Lord. He pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah. His life gives us pictures of the Lord Jesus when he appeared.

When God called Moses he spoke to him. Moses heard God speak to him. He received God's name, and he also heard, received, and believed the word which God spoke to him. The Lord speaks to us. Jesus said that his sheep hear his voice and follow him. (**John 10:27**)

The Lord uses men to accomplish his plan and purpose. It was God's plan to rescue the nation of Israel from Egypt. He called one man to accomplish this purpose.

The Lord does not need a lot of people to complete his goals. He can use one man, if he so desires. This flies in the face of how the world system thinks and operates. Men who are controlled by the thinking of the world always rely on many numbers of people to give them prestige, and position, and therefore provision, protection, and portion. It is not like that with the Lord. God can accomplish everything with one man.

The Lord accomplished eternal salvation for us through the one man Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was sent by God into this world to be our Savior and Lord. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Through this one man God provided eternal salvation and life for all those who will believe in him.

The Lord still calls people today to follow him. He has a purpose, a plan, and a mission for each one of us to accomplish. You may not hear God speaking to you out of a burning bush but the Holy Spirit can still communicate to you today. The Lord still speaks. You can talk to the Lord and the Lord will talk to you. He speaks.

Read God's word. Pray and seek the Lord. The Bible promises us if we seek the Lord that we can find him.

Acts 7:39-43

Moses was God's man to lead Israel out of Egypt and to the promised land. He was God's man, performing God's will in God's way and at God's time but the people rejected his leadership. This was a statement about the rebellious nature of man. Unbelievers will not submit to a man of God. Instead, they turn to a god of their own understanding. They create their own gods to give them guidance. They desire to satisfy the lust of the flesh. What happened with Israel at this point is typical of those beginning a walk of faith. The way seems difficult and men are tempted to abandon the living God for a god of their own understanding. Men would rather have dead religion than the living God.

Egypt represented the world system. These men wanted to return to a system they understood. In that system, as terrible as it was, they understood how to get food, clothing, provision, and protection. In the wilderness with Moses they no longer knew how to live. They did not understand that God wanted them to walk by faith and trust in him for everything.

As a result of Israel's backsliding the Lord turned his back on his people. Stephen quoted the prophets and what happened to Israel when they rejected the living God and made a false god of their own

understanding. What was Stephen's message? They made a false religion of their own understanding. They followed a man-made system of religion but rejected the true God in Jesus Christ.

People do this today. Men are religious because they yearn for guidance. Men sense their lostness and desire leadership or a principle by which they can guide their lives. Many settle for the worldly principles of self worship which exalt one's own name for provision and protection. They worship self and educate themselves in the philosophy and psychology of the world. They will take bits and pieces from various religions or self-help programs. They mix all this together and fashion their own golden calf which they can worship.

Men find it difficult to have faith and wait on God. Moses went up to talk to God, but Israel could not bear to wait for him to return. They insisted on taking matters into their own hands. They were unable to wait on the Lord. Instead, they returned in their heart to Egypt which is the world system. As a result, God turned his back on them. When God turns his back then all of what is good in life disappears. All that is good in life comes from God. When he turns his back all will go sour very quickly.

Humble yourself today, believe the gospel, and call on the name of Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Acts 7:44-47

Stephen here covered the part of Israel's history in which they built a tabernacle to keep the ark of God's covenant, and also how it was transported from one location to another until the time of David and Solomon. Stephen underlined the fact that this tabernacle was constructed exactly according to a pattern which was given to Moses by God.

This same idea about the construction of the tabernacle is also mentioned in **Hebrews 8:5**, "*Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*"

God does not change, and so men must conform to God's pattern. God revealed himself to us through his son Jesus Christ. There is no other revelation of God that is higher than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the express image and revelation of God. Jesus said that he and the Father were one. When we see Jesus we see the Father. This is why there is no other way to know God except through Jesus Christ. Everything else that pretends to reveal God to men is smoke and mirrors compared to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The idea of an exact pattern which God revealed to Moses showed us that God is absolute and unchanging. God does not conform to men. Men must conform themselves to God and his word. If we are to escape the punishment of our sins then it must be according to God's revealed pattern of salvation. There is no salvation in any other way except by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what problem we have in life it originates in Adam's sin, our sin, or in the sins of other people which affect us. The problem is always sin. Sin is the root and foundation of all your problems. What is the answer to this sin problem? It is Jesus Christ. The answer is Jesus Christ. There is no other answer.

God did not give Moses a plan B type of pattern. There was only one pattern. Moses could not improvise on the construction of this tabernacle. It had to be done God's way, with God's materials, and

with God's pattern. There is only way to serve the Lord. We must serve God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. He is the pattern. He is the ultimate fulfillment of the tabernacle which God gave to Moses. The Lord Jesus fulfilled everything in that tabernacle. He was that tabernacle. The Lord is our home.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 7:48-53

Stephen continued his address to the religious court. In his recount of the history of Israel he came to the part where David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. He did not have the opportunity to build the temple but Solomon his son did build the temple.

We know from the New Testament (John 4) when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well that God looks for those who worship him in spirit and in truth. We are not tied down to a specific geographical location when we worship God. We can serve God in any place. Jesus said where two or three are gathered together in his name that he is in the midst of them. In the New Testament it is the people of God who are now the temple of God. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

How does this affect the Christian church? People are determined to make a man-made building into the church. There is nothing wrong with having a building to meet together, but it is human nature to put more emphasis on the building itself rather than the people. It is easier to focus on the organization of the church, the finances, and the building rather than on the people who actually make up the church.

What can we do about this? We should focus on people rather than on building programs. We need to invest into what will truly last for eternity. All of the church buildings will eventually fall into ruin. But the souls of men endure. We need to invest into what will truly count for eternity.

Stephen's point was that no man-made temple could contain the Lord. The Lord cannot be contained by man-made systems, or buildings.

Stephen concluded his sermon by rebuking those who judged him. He told them that their ancestors killed the prophets and the ones who prophesied of the Messiah. They arrested Stephen in order to convict him of a crime but instead those who arrested Stephen were revealed as the true criminals. They were just like their ancestors who persecuted and killed the prophets.

Throughout Stephen's sermon he did not compromise. He showed them their own history and how everything in the Old Testament led to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they already had made up their mind to reject the Messiah. They would not accept the testimony of Stephen. Stephen knew it and he knew he had this one last opportunity to be a witness for Jesus.

May the Lord help us to be as earnest and faithful in our witness for the Lord.

Acts 7:54-59

Stephen prayed to God for the forgiveness of those who killed him. Stephen was controlled by the Holy Spirit. His statement at death was nearly the same as the words Jesus said on the cross. "*Father, forgive*

them, for they do not know what they are doing." Stephen prayed God would forgive those who sinned against him. This is in the Lord's example prayer he gave to his disciples. "Forgive us our debts, even as we forgive those who are indebted to us." Forgiveness is a bedrock character trait of a man filled with the Holy Spirit. We forgive others because the Lord Jesus died for our sins. How can we not forgive men their sins? It is God's will for us to forgive and bless those who curse us and pray for those who hurt us. Stephen walked in the Spirit.

We are introduced to a new man here. Saul of Tarsus, a man who persecuted the church and approved of the killing of Stephen, would go on to occupy most of the book of Acts as one of the greatest apostles of the Lord Jesus.

Stephen saw an open heaven. It was not enough that he rebuked them for their sins but then his proclamation of an open heaven sealed his fate. Religious people are opposed to an open heaven. Religion seeks to control men with rules, law, and traditions. The Holy Spirit sets us free so we can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we have an open heaven. We have direct access to the throne of God's grace and can come to God with confidence.

Their murder of Stephen was rejection of the only one who could save them from their sins. They were consistent in rejecting God's message of good news through Jesus Christ. Their prestige meant more to them than approval by God. The Lord Jesus stood up to welcome Stephen home. They took Stephen out and stoned him to death. The scripture says he fell asleep. This is the way the New Testament described the death of the saints. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

Why was Stephen willing to die for Jesus? Because Jesus is God, and he walked on this earth, and he gave his life upon Calvary for us. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

The Lord rewards those who are faithful until the end. Not every Christian lives a comfortable life. Many gave their lives for the Lord while serving him, especially in countries that are controlled by Islam and Communism. We should pray for these people. We pray God would open their eyes to the good news of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus died for their sins, and he is willing to forgive anyone who turns to him in humility. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Acts Chapter 8

Acts 8:1-8

After Stephen's death a wave of persecution broke out against the church. Saul was right in the middle of it. He went from house to house and dragged people off to jail.

As a result Christians scattered from Jerusalem and we see the pattern emerge which Jesus prophesied. The gospel started in Jerusalem and spread from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This was the path the gospel of Jesus Christ took.

Why didn't Christians take the initiative to spread out with the gospel? Why did it take persecution for Christians to go forward into other places? Most people, even sincere Christians, desire stability. They

want to live in peace with a home and a family and go about their daily lives. It took pressure from the outside to get people moving in the right direction. Saul's persecution provided this pressure. His persecution fanned the flames of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem into other places. It went from being a Jewish sect and spread quickly to Gentile areas also.

What did it take for the twelve sons of Israel to move their families to Egypt? It took the suffering of their brother Joseph plus a world wide famine that lasted seven years in order to move the twelve sons of Israel from Canaan to Egypt.

God speaks and tells people what to do and what will happen. He also takes us by the hand and makes sure we arrive at the intended destination. I'm so glad God does not leave it up to us to accomplish his plan. He works with us, through us, and many times in spite of us to accomplish his will and get us where we need to be in life.

Persecution is not abnormal for Christians. This has happened since the beginning with Cain and Abel. There was never a time in history when the carnal man did not persecute and kill the spiritual man. Those who walk by faith were always persecuted by those who walked in the flesh. Jesus was persecuted and he said in the same way the world persecuted him it also persecuted those who followed him. The servant is not greater than his master. Since Jesus was treated like this we also are treated like this. The enemy does not take prisoners in this war. He will stir up those he controls to do everything he can to destroy the spiritual man. See Ephesians 6. It is not the man himself who is our enemy but the evil spirit who controls that man.

The most dangerous people are those who persecute and kill other people in the name of God. Religions that teach men to kill, or hate, or persecute are inspired by the devil. Jesus said it would happen.

Acts 8:4-8

This was the Philip who was also known as Philip the Evangelist. This was not the Philip who was one of the Lord's twelve apostles, even though he was known in a broader sense of those apostles beyond the original twelve. I make this distinction because the Lord used this man in supernatural ways. He did sign miracles including driving out devils and preaching the gospel. He was used by the Lord to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ. He was also raptured away by the Spirit to another location after he baptized the eunuch.

I say all this to point out the fact that it was not just the original apostles whom God used to do miracles and signs and wonders. Even lowly deacons and evangelists were used by God in performing supernatural signs and wonders.

The important part of these scriptures which I would underline is how people were getting saved. The persecution that arose after Stephen's death drove the Christians into different areas and everywhere they went they preached the gospel. They proclaimed the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result of the gospel great joy came to the places where Philip preached. People were saved, healed, and set free. Joy accompanied the proclamation of the gospel when it was preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel preached by someone anointed by God will bring deliverance and joy to people.

Everywhere we go we should be ready to share our faith. Opportunities abound for sharing God's word with people.

Acts 8:9-25

Simon was an example of someone trying to use money to purchase influence in the church. This story reminds me of Ananias and Sapphira and makes me wonder why they died but this man was not struck dead immediately by the Holy Spirit. My guess was that Simon was ignorant and God had mercy on him. This man and also the example of Ananias and Sapphira seem to expose the same kind of sin. They were trying to use money in order to gain leverage or power within the church. How often do we see this kind of sin in the church today?

There was a reason Jesus said do not let your right hand know what your left hand does. There was a reason why people should not let others know what they did with their money. When people use money to draw attention to themselves they act on the principle of the world. What is this principle? It is the principle of self worship. It is not worship of God. It is worship of self. It is the water which springs from the fountain of unbelief and pride.

The human race is infected with this disease of self worship. Anywhere people reject Jesus we will find self worship. Self worship was expressed in ancient times through idols or tokens made out of gold or silver. Today it is seen in technology, self-help programs, and self promotion of every kind. Most of what is on social media is unfettered self promotion and self worship.

People today who are self worshipers are still attracted to tokens, jewelry, and adorning themselves. Remember Peter warned us about adorning ourselves. Why? What is the big deal? It is an expression of self worship. It is a heart of self love which adorns one's self with trinkets, tattoos, and other outward adornment.

I'm not a clothes line preacher, and I don't preach against women wearing make up. But can you tell when someone goes beyond looking presentable to trying to attract attention?

When you see men wearing multiple rings, and earrings, and carrying tokens around their neck you can safely assume they have a problem with vanity and self worship. Men who are covered with tattoos are self worshipers, unless they got the tattoo before they were saved. But I've seen pastors who were saved for years getting new tattoos. This is vanity, pride, and self worship in the pulpit. These men are under some kind of spell or delusion. Get away from them.

We don't really know what happened to this man Simon. Perhaps he was a true believer but just ignorant. We don't know. I've heard some preachers say this man was a false convert but I'm not so sure. The scripture says he believed. I've seen a lot of new Christians who were more ignorant than this man, but they were still saved. God has mercy upon people who do not know the truth, as long as they are willing to humble themselves and be corrected. This man was willing to humble himself when Peter rebuked him.

God knows the heart. The most important thing is not so much what we don't know but are we willing to be corrected? When the Lord points out something in our life are we willing to receive a word from the Lord? My hope and prayer in my own life is that I will always be ready to hear and receive

correction from the Lord. There is no hope without God's correction in our lives. We are totally blind if the Lord does not show us our problems. We will never see it on our own without God's help.

May the Lord shine his light on us today and deliver us from all ignorance, delusion, and deceit. May the Holy Spirit search our lives and set us free from every lie. Amen.

Acts 8:26-40

By the command of an angel and the direction of the Holy Spirit Philip had an opportunity to witness to the Ethiopian. He shared the gospel with him, led him to Jesus, and also had a chance to baptize him. After he baptized the man Philip was raptured out to another location. A lot happened in these verses.

God set up this divine appointment. God knew that the man searched for him. When a man searches for God he can find him. The Lord will send someone to preach the gospel to a man who sincerely searches for truth. If anyone really wants to know the Lord then God will reveal himself to him.

The Ethiopian had a copy of the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He read a scripture which was a prophecy about Jesus Christ. This was a perfect scripture for Philip to use to preach the Lord Jesus Christ to this man. No doubt Philip told him that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

This is a good scripture to use in our evangelism to people. We see a pattern of how the early disciples constantly used Bible prophecy to preach to people about the Lord Jesus Christ. We should try to imitate this pattern and use Bible prophecy to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and God's Son. By using scripture like this we are following the example of Philip.

What other scriptures can you think of in the Old Testament that prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of mankind?

Acts Chapter 9

Acts 9:1-9

Saul went to Damascus to capture Christians and put them in jail. On the way to Damascus he was stopped by the Lord Jesus. The Lord shone a bright light around him and his companions and spoke directly to Saul. It is interesting that the God of Israel speaks to Saul but Saul did not know who he was. He asked, "Who are you?" The Lord Jesus told him that he was Jesus whom Saul persecuted. After the Lord revealed himself to Saul he told him to go into the city where he would receive further instructions. His companions led him into the city because Saul was now blind. He did not eat or drink for three days.

The Lord is able to stop people in their tracks. Why doesn't he always do this? Why doesn't he stop people from carrying out evil deeds? This situation was specific. God had a calling on Saul's life. We don't know if the Lord stopped Saul because of what he was about to do, or because it was time for his life to change and for him to become an apostle of Jesus Christ. Fortunately the Lord did intervene before more Christians in Damascus were persecuted.

The Lord knew his name. The Lord called Saul by his name. Saul heard the voice of the Lord. Here was a man who at the time was not a believer in Jesus but the Lord Jesus spoke to him, and stopped him, and turned his life in a completely different direction. The Lord is able to intervene in our lives. If God can help turn this man in the right direction he can turn anyone in the right direction. How much more if you pray and ask God for guidance will he provide. The Lord will provide direction, guidance, and understanding. The Bible exhorts us to ask God for wisdom in our lives. The Lord will provide wisdom and understanding. The Lord gave Saul understanding of who God is, and who Saul was. Saul was a persecutor and injurious man. But the Lord stopped him. God granted him repentance that he would come to the truth in Jesus and be saved from the snare of the devil.

This was an important turning point in the book of Acts. As we continue the account centers more on Paul's ministry, but we still have some more about Peter and other people in the church as well.

The Lord is able to save the worst sinners. God is able to interrupt the lives of people and turn them around. Saul was an example of someone God saved by his grace. Even Paul came to realize this about himself. He was an example of someone who was saved from the worst possible sins. If God could save Saul then God could save anybody. He was an example of God's grace and mercy to the worst sinners.

Don't ever believe you are beyond God's mercy and forgiveness. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved today.

Acts 9:10-19

The Lord spoke clearly to Ananias and gave him instructions on where to go and what to do in regard to Saul of Tarsus. It is interesting how clear this word from the Lord was. It was not a vague impression or feeling. He received a street address from the Lord. Does the Lord speak this clearly to people today? I believe he does.

Ananias was not one of the twelve apostles. He was not an evangelist, deacon, or apostle. He was a nobody as far as we know. But he loved the Lord and he obeyed the Lord's command to him. Jesus told him to go lay hands on Saul, pray for him, and he would receive his sight. The Lord said he wanted to show Saul what things he would suffer for the sake of Jesus.

The Lord speaks! We see clearly the Lord spoke to Saul and revealed to him his name, Jesus of Nazareth. He spoke clearly to Ananias and told him where Saul was located and told him what to do. Ananias obeyed the Lord and Saul was healed from his blindness. He was baptized and ate some food to recover his strength.

What lessons can we learn from this? The Lord can speak to us. He can tell us what needs to be done. He can show us what he wants us to do. The Lord also heals us today. He used Ananias to heal Saul from his blindness. Why does the Lord use people like this? Why didn't he just heal Saul himself? I believe it is because the Lord wants us to work with him and participate in his plan with him. He invites us to be a part of his plan and purpose in the world.

The greatest joy I ever had in my life was working with the Lord and serving other people. There is no greater joy than serving the Lord and obeying his word for your life.

Acts 9:20-22

Saul immediately started preaching that Jesus is the Christ in the local Jewish synagogues. The people who heard him were astounded by his preaching. They knew he persecuted Christians in Jerusalem and that he came to Damascus to do the same. What happened to him? He got saved! That's what happened!

His life was immediately transformed by the Lord Jesus. He did not wait but immediately started to witness to others the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

When Jesus touched people in the New Testament it resulted in immediate evangelism. Every time Jesus healed someone they told other people. When the woman at the well understood who Jesus was she immediately told her village. When Jesus saved someone they told others the good news. This is one of the signs of genuine salvation. When a person is born again they overflow with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives a person boldness to share God's word.

Saul continued to grow in strength. The more he preached the stronger his faith grew. The same is true for us. When we share our faith it makes us stronger, even when people reject our message and testimony. It makes us stronger spiritually. As we give to others we find the Lord gives more of the Holy Spirit to us.

A born again Christian has a desire for people to be saved. He will witness, teach, preach, and share God's word. He will let others know that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts 9:23-25

Saul's testimony was so powerful the Jews decided they wanted to kill him in order to shut him up. Saul learned of their plot, and his disciples helped him escape by lowering him in a basket through a window over the wall. This was the beginning of a long journey for Saul. He would preach until he was persecuted or thrown into jail. He would leave one town, and move on to the next town. His entire life mission was preaching the gospel, and even when people rejected the message he did not stop. He would just move on to another location and continue to preach the gospel. In this way many churches were born throughout the world.

What obstacles stop us from preaching the gospel? When are we ready to leave the ministry and give up? When do we get weary and turn our back on sharing the gospel? I've seen people give up and throw in the towel. I've seen people who turned their back on the ministry. I've seen pastors get tired and quit. What did Saul have we don't have today? I think it is simple. He heard the Lord's voice. He knew Jesus gave him a job to do. I think most people who quit serving God were never convinced God called them in the first place. They joined the ministry as a career, or because they had nothing else to do, or perhaps thought it would be an easy way to live. Then they found out how hard it was to work in this field where men are stirred up by the devil to persecute you, slander you, gossip about you, and bite your hand when you try to feed them.

This is the kind of work no one appreciates, even other Christians. It is a work no one thanks you for, no one believes in, and no one thinks has any value. So how do you keep going? You remember God

spoke to you. You remember he called you by name and set you apart to serve him. This is what keeps you going. You heard God speak to you. He called you by name. He revealed himself to you. It is now your work to tell others about Jesus. It is now your work to lift up the name of Jesus.

Don't give up! Do not get weary in the work of the Lord. Let us be steadfast and unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord. We know our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Acts 9:26-30

After Saul escaped from Damascus he went to Jerusalem but the Christians did not trust him.

However, one man took a chance to help Saul. This man was Barnabas and he provided a human bridge from where Saul was to connect him to the other Christians in Jerusalem. This is a gift from the Lord. Barnabas exercised a gift that is truly needed in the church. He acted like glue to bring people together and help make peace.

Saul continued to preach in Jerusalem until people were ready to kill him. Now he had to escape for his life from Jerusalem as he did in Damascus. This pattern in Saul's life and ministry is repeated throughout the book of Acts.

Now that Saul was a Christian there was peace in the church for a time. The church continued to multiply and people walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

This phrase always stands out to me. It reminds me of parents. Children live in reverence of their father and are nourished by their mother.

This is how God is in our life. He is a parent who admonishes us to live in reverence and also comforts us with words of encouragement.

This is the purpose of preaching in the church. The purpose of prophecy is to build, encourage, and comfort God's people.

Where Saul went his testimony and preaching caused a divide among people. People either got saved or they wanted to kill him. There was no middle ground with this preacher. There was no middle ground with the Lord Jesus. Men who are filled with the Holy Spirit do not leave any middle ground for those they preach to. We are either on the Lord's side or we are on the devil's side. There is no in-between ground.

Repent of compromise and believe the gospel. Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand. The Lord Jesus gave his life for us upon Calvary. He died and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts 9:31-35

After tracking Saul's history for a while the narrative returns again to Peter's account. Peter continued to be used by the Lord to heal people.

A man by the name of Aeneas was afflicted with palsy. Through Peter's ministry this man was healed by the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, many people believed in the Lord and were saved.

As we look at each one of these accounts of divine healing we see a pattern emerging. In each case, people were brought to the Lord and saved. We can conclude that healing is not only for the benefit of the individual but also for the purpose of lifting up the name of Jesus Christ so that people can be saved. Physical healing is wonderful, but salvation of the soul has eternal value to us.

Divine healing is still for us today. God still heals people and uses it to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. By his stripes we are healed.

Psalm 103:2-3, *"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;"*

The Lord heals us, and he also forgives us all of our sins. Salvation and healing go hand in hand.

Don't be one of those Christians who rejects the reality of divine healing today. Healing and salvation go hand in hand throughout the Bible.

Acts 9:36-43

Dorcas and Tabitha are the same person. Peter called this woman Tabitha. She was known for her good works, but she fell sick, and she died.

The people who knew her called in Peter to do something about this. Obviously the work of this woman was highly valued and she was necessary in her community. Her family and friends wanted her back.

The incredible thing about this account is that God agreed with them. Through Peter's ministry, the Lord healed and raised this woman from the dead. Peter prayed, simply said "Tabitha, rise", and just like Jesus with the little girl Tabitha rose from the dead.

As a result, many heard about this, and many believed in the Lord.

This miracle benefited that community, and magnified the name of the Lord Jesus, and many people were saved as a result.

We see a definite pattern in the Bible of God raising people from the dead. This happened in the Old and New Testament. The Lord reigns even over death itself. The Lord raised people from the dead during his ministry, he himself rose from the dead, and the apostles were used by God to raise people from the dead.

Death is an enemy. It should never be longed for or wished for by any Christians. It is an enemy. We should always live our life to the fullest in God's will. Always be determined to live and not die. When death comes for the believer it is only a doorway into a greater life that God has planned for us. There is no real death for those who live and believe in Jesus.

Jesus is risen from the dead. He is at the right hand of God the Father. He lives forever and makes intercession for us. He is able to save to the utmost those who come to God through him. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved today.

Acts Chapter 10

Acts 10:1-8

An angel of the Lord appeared to Cornelius. This man was a Centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment in Caesarea. He was a religious and devout man who prayed to the God of Israel and gave to the poor. His prayers and gifts to the poor ascended to God as a memorial offering. What is a memorial offering? God heard this man's prayers. He knew to pray to the God of Israel and his prayers were heard. God sent this angel to give him direction on how he could be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The angel told him to send for the apostle Peter. Cornelius sent two of his servants and a devout soldier to go and find the apostle Peter.

A memorial offering can be seen as an offering that brings God's attention upon an individual. It can also be seen as reminding us of God's attention that is upon us. Either way, the Lord's eyes were upon this Gentile and his ears were open to his cry.

This account of Cornelius is a way to understand how all men are accountable to God. Any man in any location on earth, even without a Bible or the gospel, can reach God if they truly seek him. If men seek the truth of God then the Lord will make a way for them to understand more and more of who he is. If he does not send an angel and there is no preacher available then the Lord can reveal himself to people through visions and dreams. I've heard testimonies of how this happened to people who lived in remote parts of the world.

The Lord knew the heart of this man. Even though he was a Gentile and largely ignorant of the gospel he knew enough to seek God. He gave to the poor. He prayed to the God of Israel. He knew enough and his heart was right with the Lord. God made a way for him to get further information which would bring him to complete salvation and also his entire household.

This account also showed us that it was God's will to use men to preach the gospel. Surely the angel could have preached the good news to Cornelius, but it was the Lord's will to send for Peter and have him preach the gospel to the household of Cornelius. Why does God choose men in this fashion? It is because he wants us to participate with him in his eternal plan and his eternal kingdom. It is his desire for us to participate in what he does.

To be a part of God's plan starts with simple faith in Jesus Christ. Anyone can call upon the name of the Lord. Even a child can call on the name of Jesus and be saved.

Acts 10:9-16

Before the men Cornelius sent reached Peter the Lord was at work preparing Peter's heart to receive them. Peter was on the roof of his house to pray when he saw a vision from the Lord. The vision was a sheet let down from heaven filled with various types of animals, clean and unclean, which the Lord told him to kill and eat. However, Peter protested saying he never ate anything which was unclean. The

Lord corrected him and said that anything which the Lord said was clean was clean. God's word cleanses. God's word makes us clean.

If we remember, also, during the earthly ministry of the Lord he pronounced all foods clean as well. The point in this context was that God prepared Peter's heart to understand that God can save a Gentile by faith as well as the Jew. However, the topic of food was also important to remember, too. Christians are not under any kind of dietary laws. In fact, those who try to bring Christians under dietary laws take away from the gospel of grace. We should never add or take away from the gospel of grace. It is by grace we are saved, it is by grace we are kept, it is by grace we are sanctified and made holy. Observing days, or rules about food, only brings people into spiritual darkness and bondage.

God prepared Peter. The Lord understood Peter's background, culture, and upbringing in the Jewish religion of his day. The Lord knew Peter needed divine intervention in order for him to be willing to accept Gentiles as brothers in Christ. This was a lesson the entire early church had issues on which we will see. It was one of the biggest hurdles the early church faced. How do Gentiles fit in with this Jewish Messiah?

The Lord communicates to people through visions and dreams. He does this today. God will use any means he wants in order to communicate with people. Do not limit God's ability to speak to people in whatever way he chooses.

Acts 10:17-23

The three men sent by Cornelius arrived at Peter's house. When they arrived Peter was on the roof of the house in prayer. The Lord spoke to Peter and told him that three men arrived and that he sent them. He told Peter to go with the men. Peter went down to greet the men and asked them what they wanted. These men told Peter about Cornelius and the angel and their request. Peter invited them into the house, and the next day they all set out to go to the house of Cornelius.

What did it take to get the early church to bring in people who were not Jews? It took God working on both ends with Cornelius and also on Peter's end by showing him through a vision and speaking directly to him about these three men. The Lord continued his work of building the church. These men had little idea of what God did through their lives. They were led by the Lord one day at a time, and a little bit at a time the Lord revealed to him his plan for the church.

Peter would later be known as the apostle to the Jewish people and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. But here God used Peter to reach the Gentile people. Peter was already a leader in the church, and as a leader he would set an example for others. As we shall see later Peter's trip to the house of a Gentile raised a lot of questions for the church. Peter was brought in to defend his actions before the church.

He needed to have a word from the Lord to do this and he had it. The Lord spoke to him and gave him specific instructions. The Lord not only spoke to him, but also confirmed his word by speaking to Cornelius through an angel and sending for him. The Lord will lead us without any mistake. If we will seek the Lord he will give us clear directions for our life and what he would have for us to do.

Don't be concerned if things do not seem clear in your life. Live each day for the Lord. Live in obedience to what you know from his word. Do what he puts in front of you. Be faithful with what he gives to you. Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart as unto the Lord.

The Lord promises he will instruct us and teach us in the way we should go. **Psalm 32:8**, "*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*"

Acts 10:24-33

Peter arrived at Caesarea where Cornelius waited with his family and friends. Cornelius was overwhelmed and fell down at Peter's feet but Peter admonished him to get up. Peter told him he was just a man. This is an important point to remember. Peter did not exalt himself. He did not make a name for himself. He was there in obedience to the Holy Spirit and to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

Peter told them it was unlawful for a Jew to come into the house of Gentile in this manner. However, he shared with them that God had taught him to not call any man unclean that God had accepted. He was referring back to the vision of the sheet. So, we understand from Peter's interpretation that he understood that Gentiles could be saved as well as Jews. God does not show favoritism, but accepts people from all nations who believe in him.

Peter asked him why he was sent for, and again Cornelius told the story about the appearance of the angel and the instructions he received regarding Peter. This meeting was at God's divine guidance and direction.

Cornelius thanked him for coming to them and told Peter they were ready to hear everything which God put on his heart to tell them. Cornelius, his family, and his friends were ready to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This shows us, again, that when people seek after the Lord with all of their hearts he can be found. God will reveal himself to any person who seeks him in honesty and truth. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

The Lord teaches us through this passage that we cannot judge people by their ethnic background or their culture or where they come from. God will accept any man who comes to him in humility and faith. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. There are many people from all different nations who are in heaven. This is something which John saw and described in the book of Revelation.

Christians should never, never allow any racism or prejudice in our hearts. This is a problem in today's world and Satan fans the flames of hatred and violence because of the roots of this sin in America. May God have mercy on us, and heal us, and deliver us from this curse in America.

Acts 10:34-43

Peter's proclamation of the gospel got right to the point and to the heart of the message that brings salvation.

Peter reminded them that they all knew of current events in that region. They all heard about John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus. They knew he went around doing good, healing people, and driving out the

devil. Peter confirmed that this very same Jesus was the Lord of all, and that he was crucified on a cross, he died, but he rose again from the dead on the third day.

Peter told them that he and the other apostles were personal eyewitnesses of these things. It was through the Lord Jesus and faith in his name that men receive forgiveness of sins.

What are the important points here to remember?

The life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were all observed by men who lived with him, ate food with him, listened to him, and walked down the road with him. Jesus is a real person. He healed people, drove out the devil, and proclaimed the gospel to the poor. He died on a cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. He rose from the dead on the third day. Through faith in the name of Jesus men receive forgiveness of their sins.

Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, but he also died for all men. God does not show any favoritism. The Holy Bible teaches us that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. God will justify and cleanse any man if we will believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. He is the only way to God. He is the only way we can receive forgiveness of our sins.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter still spoke to the people the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the message. The people immediately heard, believed, and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. How did the Jewish people who were with Peter know that the Gentiles were saved and accepted by God? They heard them speaking in tongues. This should cause us to pause and think. Reject modern doctrine which rejects the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This Pentecostal doctrine of speaking in tongues is on display here as evidence that these men were saved. Remember this!

Does everyone have to speak in tongues to be saved? Later Paul taught about this and he said that not everyone has the gift of speaking in tongues. But if you do not have this gift do not try to say that no one else can have it. Denominations who teach that speaking in tongues is not for today are guilty of forbidding people from speaking in tongues. **1 Corinthians 14:39**, "*Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*"

When a preacher says that speaking in tongues is not for today he is in effect forbidding people to speak with tongues. Don't be guilty of this. Even if you do not believe in it, do not forbid it, and do not preach against it. The scripture is plain. Forbid not to speak with tongues.

This was a turning point for the church. It would soon become official that not only were Jews meant to be saved, but also Gentiles were saved. The same spiritual gifts given to the Jewish church were also poured out upon Gentiles who heard the gospel, believed, and received God's free gift of salvation.

Acts Chapter 11

Acts 11:1-18

When Peter returned to Jerusalem he was called in by Jewish people in the church to give an account why he went into a Gentiles' house and ate food with them. From this we can clearly see that people did

not understand the Lord's plan to save not only Israel but also the entire world through his work at Calvary in his death, burial, and resurrection. We may find it hard to understand today this lack of understanding of God's will for all men to be saved but in those days they believed that only those in Israel were God's chosen people. Anyone outside of Israel was not one of God's people. Of course, this was a misunderstanding, because even in the Old Testament we see Gentile people were grafted into God's chosen people. Examples include Rahab the harlot during the time of Joshua, and also the Moabite woman Ruth who became the ancestor of King David.

Peter carefully retold all of the details surrounding this event, including his vision, the Lord speaking to him, and how the Gentiles were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues just like the Jewish believers. From this testimony the Jewish people in the church realized Gentiles were saved also. Remember, the evidence that convinced these Jews that Gentiles were accepted by God was the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fact that Gentiles spoke in tongues when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Another thought about this I had was the fact that Peter allowed himself to be interrogated in this manner. Did they not know who Peter was? Couldn't Peter do whatever he wanted and people were just expected to accept it and fall in line? After all, when Peter walked through town people were healed by just his passing shadow. How dare these people call into question what Peter did? Didn't God use Peter to raise the dead? And heal the lame man? Wasn't he one of the original 12 apostles of Jesus Christ and an eyewitness of the transfiguration? Yes, all that is true. But it did not matter. It did not make Peter above other Christians. It did not mean he could exalt himself over other people. His experience, his gift, his calling, and his time with the Lord did not mean he was above anyone else.

We need to get this through our head! These early Christians showed us that there were no "leaders" of the church in the same way we think of "leaders" today. Our concept of leadership today is tainted by the corporate business world and by politics. This is not the kind of leadership that Jesus showed these people. Jesus taught them by word and example that a leader was someone who served other people.

Peter patiently explained his actions, and appealed to these people on the basis of the facts. He did not try to demand his rights or exert any kind of apostolic authority over these people. Instead, he appealed to them with facts, and also with the truth of what he saw and witnessed. It was up to those people to hear, receive, and believe what Peter said.

I have not seen this myself very often. Leadership that was modeled in front of me has usually consisted of men who exalt themselves and who assert their authority aggressively over other people. This is because many Christian "leaders" are brainwashed by what they see in the world. Their model of leadership is not based on the Bible but it is based on their own natural instinct and what they consider as "normal" from what they observe in the world.

Peter was not like this. He followed the example of the Lord Jesus and humbled himself before these brothers in order to win them over to the truth.

Acts 11:19-30

After the disciples of the Lord were scattered throughout the region they preached mainly to the Jewish people about Jesus. However, there were some who preached the Lord Jesus to Gentile people. As a

result, Gentiles were saved and the church grew in places like Antioch. It was Antioch where these early disciples were first known as Christians.

The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to find out what happened. He was glad by what he saw. It was evident to him that the Lord did this work among the Gentiles. He encouraged them to be steady in their faith in the Lord and to continue to grow in the Lord. Barnabas saw a great need for Bible teaching so he got Saul from Tarsus and brought him to Antioch to help with this new church. As we shall see going forward the record in the book of Acts from this point focuses more on Paul's ministry to the Gentiles.

A footnote here at the end of this chapter included information that prophets foretold a worldwide famine. As a result of their prophetic ministry the Christians organized and sent help to other parts of the church in different areas. These were examples of relief organizations. Acts recorded that the relief was sent by the hands of Saul and Barnabas.

What can we learn from this section? The Lord is not restricted by ethnic groups. He reaches people from all nations and all cultures. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for the whole world. The Lord burdens certain men in ministry to go to unreached people groups. The outreach to the Jewish people was already well established. Now the Lord raised up men such as Barnabas and Saul to reach the Gentiles with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think it is an interesting note that the Bible included here that the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians at Antioch. I always wonder why people want to identify themselves as "Christ follower" or "disciple" when the Bible itself provided us with what disciples of Jesus or Christ followers are actually called. We are Christians! Why attempt to identify as something else? I assume many people do this because they try to be culturally or politically sensitive. However, I think Christians should still be proud to identify themselves as Christians. I am in Christ. I am a Christian. Amen.

Acts Chapter 12

Acts 12:1-4

Up until this point persecution against the church came mainly through the religious leaders who opposed Jesus, betrayed him to Pilate, and the religious leaders who persecuted the apostles and early church. Now, we see the Gentile world government took notice of the church and joined in persecuting the church. These are the two groups which always attack God's people. False religion and secular government join hands to persecute true Christians. This is the pattern through all of history and continues to this day.

Herod captured the apostle James, the brother of John, and had him put to death with the sword. This probably meant he was beheaded in a similar fashion as John the Baptist. Already we see one of the original twelve apostles now lost his life in service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Herod saw the murder of James made the religious leaders happy he also arrested Peter and put him in prison. Peter did not meet the same fate as James but was let out of prison by the Lord. This contrast between one apostle who died and another who was delivered is an interesting contrast. It raises the question of why does one die and another live?

At the root of this question is God's justice or fairness. We have to be very careful when we allow our mind to go in this direction. Any question like this must be kept within the context of God's wisdom, his love, and his foreknowledge of all things. God knows the end from the beginning. Was the life of the apostle James wasted because he died so early in his ministry? We might say the same thing about the Lord himself. Jesus only lived about 33 years on this earth before he was crucified. Who are we to judge if a man's life is wasted?

This question reminds me of the missionary martyr Jim Elliot. He was a young man, in his thirties, but died on the mission field trying to reach the Auca Indians in South America with the gospel. Some people might say his early death was a waste of a life. But what was the result of this? His testimony and those who died with him traveled around the world. Their sacrifice inspired an entire generation of young men to give their lives as missionaries for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not recorded what happened as a result of the death of Stephen or James. But rest assured they did not die in vain. Their lives had an impact upon their generation. Their testimony is still with us today in the Holy Bible.

Any life given to the Lord is never wasted. All things work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

Acts 12:5-19

Herod arrested Peter and put him in prison. We have a detailed description of his imprisonment with a multitude of soldiers and two chains. He was locked down. Herod's intention was to execute Peter after Easter.

However, the Lord had other plans for the apostle Peter. The Lord sent his angel to rescue Peter out of this prison. The angel hit Peter to wake him up. The angel told him to put on his clothes and follow him. The angel led him out of the prison and into the street. The entire time Peter did not think it was real. He thought he was having a vision. It was only after the angel left him that Peter realized he was indeed delivered from prison by an angel from the Lord.

The ministry of angels is real. The Lord sends angels to intervene in the lives of people as he sees a need. I've heard testimonies of people who knew they were delivered from a life threatening situation by a mysterious man who would disappear afterwards. Angels walk among us. They are ministers of God doing his will and they intervene in the lives of people. I believe they especially intervene in the lives of Christians. The Bible tells us they minister to those who inherit salvation. (**Hebrews 1:14**).

People can get caught up in the worship of angels. It is important to acknowledge that angels are real but at the same time do not become caught up in worshiping angels. This is a trap of the enemy. Don't allow yourself to get sidetracked into the worship of angels. Angels of God will redirect worship to God alone. We see this in the Bible when men would fall down before an angel. The angel would rebuke them and tell them to worship God alone. (**Revelation 22:8-9; Colossians 2:18**).

The Lord can rescue us out of any situation. As long as God still has a purpose for you on this planet he will save you, rescue you, feed you, and take care of you.

However, when your mission is complete then it is time to go. Nothing will stop you from leaving this planet when your mission is complete. This is why it is completely useless to be afraid of death.

Stop and ponder the fact that Peter was sound asleep the night before he was supposed to be executed. Do you think he was afraid? I don't think he was concerned. Peter saw his Lord killed on a cross, and buried in a tomb. He saw Jesus alive from the dead.

Death no longer had any power in Peter's mind. He knew Jesus Christ is resurrection and life. There is no fear of death for the believer in Jesus Christ. Anyone who lives and believes in Jesus will never die but just pass from this life to the next life.

When Peter showed up at John Mark's house the church who prayed for him had a strange reaction. They did not believe he was in fact out of prison. They thought that Rhoda who heard Peter's voice was seeing or hearing his "angel". What does that mean?

God saves, rescues, and delivers. Trust in the Lord with your life. Do not live in fear of what tomorrow may bring. Instead, rejoice in God who is more than able to supply all of your needs.

Acts 12:20-25

An angel rescued the lowly apostle from prison. The same man who arrested Peter, Herod, now exalted himself and was acclaimed as a god by the people who heard him speak. An angel rescued Peter but an angel killed Herod. He didn't die slowly, and he didn't die with dignity. He was immediately struck down by the angel and was eaten by worms. This is not the first example of God's wrath in the book of Acts. Remember Ananias and Sapphira? People have no idea who they are messing with when it comes to dealing with the Lord. They have no concept of God's power and majesty. Rest assured any man who exalts himself or allows himself to be worshiped will be struck down sooner or later with God's wrath. The sentence of death has already been passed. The wages of sin is death.

The only hope anyone has to escape from the punishment of their sins is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus died for our sins on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. We are justified through the work which Jesus did. His work is complete and finished. All God wants from us is to hear, receive, and believe the good news. Our sins are forgiven through the work which Jesus did for us.

All human rulers eventually fail. The answer to our problems is not human government. People put so much energy and faith in politics and human government. This is not the real answer to our problems. Our real answer is to live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in any man. Man cannot save us. Only Jesus can save us from ourselves.

We can see the implosion of human government today. All political systems eventually deteriorate and fail. There are no solutions which men can come up with that can sustain life for a long period of time. This world system is based on the principles of death and self worship. It is doomed to failure.

I look forward to the kingdom of God coming to this earth. There will be no real life until Jesus returns and saves us.

Acts Chapter 13

Acts 13:1-12

This missionary journey began with fasting and prayer. Paul did not work alone but in the company of other believers. There were men who were gifted as prophets, and they fasted and prayed with Paul and Barnabas. While they fasted, prayed, and worshiped the Lord the Holy Spirit spoke and told them to set aside Barnabas and Paul. After they fasted and prayed these men laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and then sent them off to do their work for the Lord.

On this missionary journey John Mark was with them as their helper. He traveled with them as far as Perga before he turned back to Jerusalem. This seemed like a small detail but it came into play later when it caused a break up of this team between Paul and Barnabas.

When they preached they would go to the Jewish synagogues first and preach the gospel. They continued to travel and preach and ran into opposition with a sorcerer by the name of Elymas. This man tried to oppose their message, but Paul proved that greater is HE that is in the Christian than he that lives in sorcerers. Paul spoke God's word and this man was struck with temporary blindness. The proconsul to whom they preached saw this and was astounded and he believed the gospel.

The enemy opposes the work of God, but when believers stand upon the sacred ground of the finished work of Jesus Christ and take their authority in Jesus name the enemy has to retreat. Scripture teaches us to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil and the devil will flee. The devil cannot stand up against the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:4, *"You, little children, are from God and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."*

I remember when I was a young Christian and traveled with a group of men who went to churches and shared our testimony. We stopped at a McDonald's to eat lunch and there was a witch there at that McDonald's. She was very agitated at us and came up behind one of our group at the order counter. This Christian man turned around and said *"Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world"*. This woman let out a screech and ran out of that McDonald's. I had never seen anything like that before and have not seen anything like it since then. It was an extraordinary demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The enemy was defeated by the Lord Jesus at Calvary. Jesus destroyed the work of the devil through his death, and burial, and resurrection. We need to continue to abide in the gospel, and proclaim the good news that Jesus saves. Amen.

Acts 13:13-41

John Mark left the missionary group to return to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas continued to go forward and entered a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. Here they were invited to share their message to the local congregation.

Paul presented a simple and straight forward message from God's word and proved that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. He was the fulfillment of God's promises made to David in the

Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in scripture about the Messiah. Paul exhorted the people to believe that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of everything the Bible pointed to. Through the Lord Jesus men receive forgiveness of sins and justification. I like how Paul puts this when he drives home the truth about justification.

Acts 13:39, *"Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."*

The law of Moses only pointed us forward to Jesus. The law was a teacher to lead us to Christ. But the fulfillment of everything in the Bible was found in Jesus Christ. Why do people want to go back to following the law and religious rules? Because they do not really know Jesus. They do not have a personal relationship with the Messiah.

Everyone who knows the Lord Jesus is set free from the law of God. We are not saved, justified, sanctified, or glorified by the law of God or through striving with the law of God. The law of God shows us we are sinners in need of the Savior. Period. The End.

Paul preached to these people that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem rejected Jesus Christ and had him crucified. Jesus died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. His resurrection was witnessed by many people. Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the Messiah. He is fully God, and he is fully man. He is our substitute before God. All of our sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. There is nothing the devil can do now. All the power of the devil was stripped away from him. None of his accusations can stick any longer to the man who believes in Jesus Christ.

It would be a good idea to read this sermon repeatedly to understand the outline of the message we need to proclaim to our generation. There are so many messages that people preach today. But who is proclaiming this message that Paul preached in that synagogue?

The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today and be saved.

Acts 13:42-52

After their first message to the synagogue the people wanted them to come back and preach again. What we might call revival today broke out in that area after just one service. The following week when they came back to preach again the whole town came out to hear them preach. Because the crowds were so huge the Jews in the synagogue were jealous and stirred up trouble. They contradicted the message that Paul and Barnabas preached. As a result, Paul and Barnabas told them that since the Jews rejected the gospel that it would turn to the salvation of the Gentiles. When the Jews rejected the gospel then they would preach to the Gentiles. This was their pattern in the ministry. They would always try to reach the Jewish people first. When the Jewish people would not receive the message then they turned and preached the gospel to the Gentile people.

Paul quoted Bible prophecy about the gospel going to the Gentiles. In verse 47 he quoted the Bible prophecy that said that the message of God would be a light to the Gentiles.

From this point forward we see the gospel went more and more to the Gentile people who gladly heard and received the message of salvation. Today we don't even think of the church as being Jewish, but the

gospel is still to this day for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. The light came from Israel, and went to the nations. Always remember that Jesus in his humanity came into this world as a Jewish man. Any hatred against Jewish people is hatred against God. The Jewish people still hold an important part in God's plan and they are beloved by God for the sake of their fathers.

Jesus is the light of the Gentiles. He died on the cross, not only for the elect of Israel, but also for everyone who would hear the message and believe. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

Acts Chapter 14

Acts 14:1-7

When they arrived at Iconium Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue. They preached the gospel to the local congregation and people believed their message. The unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles in the area against the message of the apostles. They continued to preach boldly for a while until the religious people and the secular government united against them in a plot to kill them. When they heard of this they fled and continued to preach the gospel in new places.

This is a pattern repeated through the book of Acts and the record of the early church. The gospel was preached without compromise and the Holy Spirit confirmed the message with signs and wonders through those who preached the message. Many people believed the message. Those who did not believe would violently oppose them. There was no middle ground. Those who did not believe would not just live and let live. They violently opposed the message of the gospel.

This contrast shows us there are only two sides. We are either for the Lord Jesus or we are against him. There is no real middle ground. God is light, and in him there is no darkness. We are in agreement with God's message about his son Jesus Christ, or we are in disagreement. People who do not believe the gospel will evolve to violently oppose it. This message greatly antagonizes unbelievers to the point that they must fight against it with violence. This pattern is seen from the beginning with Cain and Abel.

When I mention patterns I am talking about certain fixed, unchanging principles which are built into the world. These fixed and unchanging principles point us to God who never changes. God is eternal. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. These fixed truths reflect our Creator. God will not conform himself to man.

When men are exposed to the gospel they are reminded that God is their creator and owns them. Men naturally rebel against God's authority over them. Man-made religion does not have this impact. Man-made religion makes men comfortable in their sin and rebellion. But the gospel does not allow us to remain in our sin. God's love demonstrated in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will not allow us to justify ourselves or our sin. We either accept God's free gift of salvation provided through Christ's atonement or we are separated from God forever in a devil's hell.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 14:8-20

While in the cities of Lystra and Derbe Paul preached and saw a man lame from birth. Paul saw the man had faith to be healed and said loudly to him to stand up. The man jumped to his feet and was healed. The people recognized this was a miracle. This is similar to how Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple and had similar consequences for the apostles.

After this man was healed the people decided Barnabas and Paul were gods and attempted to sacrifice to them. The apostles rebuked them for this and tried to point the crowd to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, there were Jews who arrived. They had previously persecuted the apostles in other cities. They now stirred up the crowd to stone Paul. Paul was stoned, he was dragged bodily through the city, and then was left outside the city for dead. They presumed he was dead. When the disciples went to collect the corpse Paul arose and went back into the city. Shortly thereafter he and Barnabas left to preach in other places.

This incident of Paul's stoning was probably an example of a near death experience. Later in **2 Corinthians 12** Paul described himself seeing the third heaven. It is possible he might have died temporarily and went to heaven and then the Lord sent him back to continue his work. This experience left a deep impression on Paul. There are many people who share testimonies of dying and coming back and their stories tend to share common points.

There is life after death. Our existence does not end when we leave this temporary shell of our body. The soul of man continues to exist. We are made in the image of God and will continue to endure. There is no question about this.

However, the question is: where will you live? Will we live with God, or will we go to a place of eternal separation from God? We cannot begin to imagine how horrible it would be to exist in a place separated from God. Everyone on this earth enjoys God's presence whether they realize it or not. They enjoy day, and light, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, and can be inspired by nature, or art, or even a bright, blue sky. None of those things exist where God's presence is absent. Imagine existing in a place of complete darkness where there is no joy, or peace, or happiness. It is the complete absence of all that is good and everything we take for granted on earth. I don't want to go there. When I leave this body I want to go and be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can we make sure that we go to God when we die? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 14:21-25

Here we have details on the missionary journey the apostles took. It lists the cities and towns they traveled through and the work they did in those areas. One phrase that stands out to me in these verses: *"...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"*. People need to remember this.

What does this mean? For starters, we should not tell potential new Christians that if they get saved all of their problems will go away. Don't tell a new Christian that once they are saved they will be healthy, wealthy, and all of their problems will be over.

Instead, we should teach new Christians that there is difficulty ahead. Unbelievers and religious people persecute born again Christians. The Calvary road is the path of denying self, taking up the cross, and enduring what the world throws at us.

However, as we continue to walk by faith and endure we experience the presence of the Lord, and this brings peace and joy. This peace the world cannot understand. We are blessed with spiritual blessings from the Lord which provides us with peace in the midst of every storm. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit to comfort us, teach us, guide us, and lead us.

What does the world have? All they have is what the world system teaches them: money, fame, pride, fleeting success, and building their lives upon a foundation that crumbles in the end.

What does the Christian have? We have a solid foundation in the Lord Jesus Christ which will endure no matter what tribulation we go through.

The apostles helped the local churches organize with local leadership. They prayed for them, laid hands on men, appointed leadership, and helped them to have churches that were well grounded and stable in Bible doctrine.

Acts 14:26-28

The apostles shared an account of their journey and mission with the local church. This was an example which is followed to this day in many churches that send out missionaries. The missionaries go to the field for a while, and then they come back to their sending churches to report on their progress, on how many people were saved, or baptized, or joined their local missionary churches.

This showed us the principle of how the body of Christ worked together to accomplish the Lord's great commission. Not everyone went to the foreign mission field. However, never forget that the local area where we live is still a mission field. There are still people in our local area who need to hear the gospel and be brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

There are many reasons to share the account of missionaries. One purpose was to inspire and motivate Christians in local churches to remember the great commission and our true calling from God to be salt and light in this world.

Another purpose was to help provide material support for the work the missionaries did in the field. Who would support the people in the field if it was not the local church? Who would help financially support the missionaries if the local church did not do it? When the local church did not support missionaries then the missionaries could not do their work either. As a result, people are not reached with the gospel in foreign countries.

It is the job of the entire church to reach the entire world with the gospel. Many people do this right now but they need prayer and financial support to accomplish the work of the great commission.

Acts Chapter 15

Acts 15:1-4

The introduction of religious tradition and rules into the church started way back in the early church. Why do we see this record of the introduction of Judaism back into the Christian church? It shows us how the enemy operates to dilute or cancel the gospel of grace. The church is not bound by the Hebrew or Jewish rules, traditions, or observances. However, there were always men who crept into the church to infect God's people with religious leaven.

At that time those men attempted to introduce false doctrine that taught that in order to be saved a man had to be circumcised. This was in direct contradiction to the gospel of grace which Paul preached. Paul and Barnabas immediately disputed with the false teachers because they recognized this false gospel attempting to infiltrate the church.

How did the devil attempt to destroy the church? He inspired religious people to persecute and kill the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After he stirred up the followers of dead religion he then stirred up unbelievers in government, business, and society to persecute believers in Jesus.

Another strategy the enemy used in his war against the church was to send false brethren who taught doctrines of devils. A doctrine of devils minimizes or makes the work of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary irrelevant.

If circumcision was needed in order to be saved then why did Jesus die on the cross? If we can do anything to earn salvation, or indeed, do anything to further spiritual growth through striving to obey religious laws then Christ's work upon Calvary was not enough.

Do you see why this is so horrible when people add or take away from the gospel? In essence these men denied the gospel by adding to it and thereby rendering the message void of salvation.

How many people follow church rules and traditions but have no saving faith in Christ because they never heard the gospel? How many religious people are there who are not even saved? False gospels in today's world abound. We see the beginning of the work of false gospels in this chapter.

May the Lord give us discernment and wisdom so that we are not deceived by false gospels of men.

Acts 15:5-21

The controversy of introducing traditions back into the church continued.

Some of the Pharisees believed the gospel yet were unable to let go of their religious traditions handed down to them by their fathers.

The leaders in the church came together to consider this matter. They understood the importance of clarifying this question to everyone because it had great potential of damaging the work of the gospel.

During this council Peter gave his testimony of how God used him to preach at the home of Cornelius. Now we see the importance of why God chose Peter to preach the gospel to the Gentiles even though the main evangelism of Gentiles was picked up by Paul. It was important that Peter experience this because he was a leader in the early church in Jerusalem.

After Peter exhorted them not to put a yoke around the neck of the Gentiles believers then Paul and Barnabas shared their account of ministry among the Gentiles.

After Paul and Barnabas finished the apostle James spoke for them all.

These men all spoke by the same Holy Spirit and were all in agreement. They knew by the Holy Spirit that it was wrong to burden believers in Christ. It is by grace we are saved, through faith, not of works. We are saved by grace and faith in Jesus Christ and not by following religious rules.

James quoted scripture which pointed to the gospel traveling to Gentiles. James decided not to trouble the Gentiles with Hebrew or Jewish traditions but instead wrote a letter exhorting them to abstain from idols, fornication, and things strangled, and from blood. This was the bare minimum requirement. The dietary exhortations were there for good health but also have spiritual implications as well. Life is in the blood. Blood is sacred to God. Men are not supposed to eat meat with blood in it. It is bad for your health. But notice that they did not forbid people from eating meat. They did not bring them into bondage to any Jewish tradition or rules.

There is no circumcision, Sabbath keeping, holy day observing, or any other kind of tradition or rules that Christians were commanded to keep. All the observances of holidays which Christians keep today stem from pagan traditions which were funneled through a compromising Catholic church. The Protestant Christians were unable to shake themselves free from these things.

Why are these issues so important? There are many Christians who are very conscientious and easily deceived into obeying rules, traditions, and laws which God does not put upon us.

Why is this important? Because men use religious systems to control and manipulate people. They use these systems to make a name for themselves, to exalt themselves, to make a name for their sect, their denomination, or their particular brand of church.

All these divisions come from carnal men, from the devil, and from people exalting themselves over their brethren.

At every point where a church thinks it is "distinct" from other Christians we will find a spirit of pride and self exaltation. At these points of division there is always pride and self worship involved.

Acts 15:22-29

Here we have an exact copy of the letter the church council sent to their sister churches. These sister churches were primarily Gentiles and needed help to resolve these religious controversies.

Why did the Holy Spirit think this letter was so important that it was included word for word in the Holy Bible?

I am of the firm belief that a great danger to the church is false religion and false spirituality. This false religious spirit in the church is manifest primarily by adding to or taking away from the gospel.

What do men add to the gospel? Traditions. Rules. Laws. They attempt to make themselves more spiritual than other brothers in Christ because they observe this, or they keep such and such holiday, or they have certain standards which other churches don't have. These extra religious burdens are put upon men by men who exalt themselves over their brethren.

We have this letter as a reminder to never listen to any man who wants to lay a religious burden on you. Don't even let a preacher make you uneasy because you missed church on Sunday. Don't ever let any man dictate to your conscience with any kind of rule, law, standard, tradition, or morality.

Our morality is the Holy Ghost who lives inside of us. Our law is not a moral code, but it is the Holy Ghost who lives within us and tells us how to live, behave, speak, and act. We must learn to completely rely upon the Holy Ghost inside of us. If you add anything to the gospel then you are not listening to the Holy Ghost but you are listening to carnal men who want to control your life, take your money, and exalt themselves.

Read this letter and ask yourself a question. How many traditions am I following that God has not asked me to follow? How many rules do I follow that have been taught to me by men but have not been taught to me by the Holy Ghost? How many traditions do I blindly accept that men practice but are not taught by the Holy Ghost?

Read the Bible for yourself. Evaluate and test everything by the Holy Ghost and the scripture. Do not be a blind follower of men, but always seek for the freedom that you have in Christ Jesus. Come out of false churches, false denominations, false sects, cults, and religious groups. Come out of them! Humble yourself before the Lord, call on the name of Jesus, and ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Ghost. All you need is Jesus!

Acts 15:30-35

The brothers arrived at the church in Antioch and read the letter to the church. The brothers in Christ at Antioch rejoiced and were relieved at being set free from the false religion of the Hebrew Christians. They now knew for certain that they were free to follow God and not be obligated to follow the religious rules and traditions of men.

We are not bound by man-made rules, traditions, and laws. Instead, we have been set free by the Holy Ghost so we can serve God in the power of the Spirit. Those who live according to the letter of the law are covered up with spiritual death. Their ministry is a ministry of death and condemnation.

But those who minister in the power of the Holy Spirit bring spiritual life. Jesus said that his words were spirit and life. If we go to a church where we walk out every Sunday more depressed than when we went in then something is wrong! Why keep going somewhere that is oppressed by the devil? Come out from among them and be separate and touch not this unclean religion of men.

Allow me to provide examples of dead religion: the Catholic church, the Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). All of these are dead religions and full of evil spirits. Get out of there! Don't look back.

Even mainline "Christian" denominations have widespread gangrene and death in their churches as well.

Any church, ministry, denomination, or preacher that denies that God is three in one (the Trinity) or who deny that Jesus Christ is God and Man, are a cult.

Jesus is fully God. He is also fully man. He is the God Man. Don't let go of either one. Jesus is a man. Jesus is God. He is both. As a man he is our Savior and the Lamb of God. As God he is our Lord and King. If we deny either of these then we are a false dead religion cult. People who deny the Trinity are incidentally denying either the humanity or divinity of Jesus Christ.

Notice the Bible said that Judas and Silas were prophets. What does this tell us? The ministry of prophets did not end with John the Baptist. There were New Testament prophets. There were prophets in the early church and there are still prophets in the church today. Don't listen to Pharisees in the modern church who say there are no apostles and prophets in the church today. They are just trying to keep the control of God's people to themselves. They are controlling God's people because of pride and money.

Don't listen to preachers who say that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are not for today. Don't listen to preachers who say there are no apostles and prophets today. These preachers have a lying and deceiving spirit on them. They are controlled by the false spirit of dead religion.

The church today needs prophets who will build, and encourage, and comfort God's people. I believe before the end of all things we will see a revival of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church. We need this! We are in the last days! We need true, God anointed watchmen and prophets and shepherds to warn God's people and exhort God's people and comfort God's people.

Look at the result of these prophet's words! The people rejoiced. Do you want to see true joy in God's people. Let loose some of God's prophets and you will see rejoicing again among God's people.

Acts 15:36-41

Here we come to the separation of Paul and Barnabas. Up until this point Paul and Barnabas were together in the ministry. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but Paul did not want him because Mark had turned back. Paul did not have any confidence in Mark. As always Barnabas stood up for the underdog. Two teams were created instead of just one. These two brothers took two other brothers and the two teams went in different directions.

Division is never a good thing. I know I've heard a lot of preachers say this division was a good thing because it meant that the work of the ministry was multiplied, but I'm not so sure about that. I don't think division is ever a good thing.

We see the facts are just reported as they happened. I don't see anything good about this break up of men in the ministry. But we are given the facts as they happened. Paul took Silas and went in one direction. Barnabas took Mark and went in another direction. Sadly, I don't think we hear anymore about Barnabas in the book of Acts. The record continued to follow Paul and Silas and what happened in their work. Mark was mentioned later in the New Testament in Paul's letter to Timothy. Paul seemed

to have changed his mind about Mark and said he was profitable for the ministry. Maybe later he grew to regret this falling out between himself and Barnabas.

The work continued to spread. They continued to visit brethren in every city where they had preached in order to build the churches in the faith. Paul went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

Let us always strive to live at peace with all men as much as it is in our power to do so. Avoid conflict and division as much as possible. No matter what happens continue to do the work God called you to do. Even if you have to walk the road on your own don't stop preaching the word. Keep on lifting up the name of Jesus.

Acts Chapter 16

Acts 16:1-5

A young man who was a disciple of the Lord Jesus joined Paul. This young man was Timothy.

We know a lot about Timothy because we have two letters which Paul wrote to Timothy. We know Timothy grew to be an important leader in the church and was trusted by the apostle Paul.

We have a brief sketch of Timothy's history in these verses. His mother was a Jew and a believer in Jesus. His father was a Gentile.

When Paul took Timothy as a co-worker in the gospel he circumcised Timothy. This might seem to contradict what we read earlier about how Paul and Barnabas opposed the practice of circumcision in the church.

In the earlier context it was Jews who tried to bring circumcision into the church and force the practice upon Gentiles in order to prove their salvation.

In the current context Paul circumcised Timothy because they tried to reach unbelieving Jews with the gospel and he wanted to remove anything which would be an obstacle. He tried to remove any excuse Jews had to not listen to their presentation of the gospel.

Think of it like this. Would you go into a Muslim country to preach the gospel and order a pork sandwich in front of someone you witnessed to? Probably not. It would be a stumbling block to them, because in their religion and culture that is unclean.

Paul tried to remove anything from his life and Timothy's that would be a stumbling block to the Jews coming to faith in Christ.

This had nothing to do with how Paul opposed the believing Jews who wanted to include circumcision into the fabric and life of the church. In that case it was right to resist and to oppose religious traditions like circumcision.

In Paul's own words, he allowed himself to be under the law in order to reach those who were under the law. And when he preached to Gentiles he became like them in order to reach them with the gospel. He

was willing to lay aside his own personal preferences or lifestyle in order to reach people with the gospel. The most important thing to Paul was that people be brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Timothy was known to have a Gentile father. This would stop them from going into synagogues and preaching in those regions. So, in order to continue his ministry in synagogues he had to play by the rules of the synagogue. He became a Jew in order to reach Jews with the gospel. He became a Roman at times, also, in order to further his work. He used whatever tools he had to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is no contradiction if you understand the context and why he circumcised Timothy.

The churches were established in the faith and increased in number daily.

Acts 16:6-10

The Holy Spirit was actively involved in the ministry of Paul and his fellow workers. The Holy Spirit made it clear to them what direction to take, where to go, and who they should preach the gospel to. The Lord gave men visions and dreams in order to help them to understand his will for their work and ministry.

Why do some Christians today refuse to believe that God can speak to us like this? Why would God speak to men like this?

I believe God speaks to us like this. God speaks through the scriptures, and through the written word of God. Anything we receive in a vision or dream must be evaluated and judged by God's written word.

However, the Holy Spirit speaks to us in whatever way he wants to. He can speak to us in an audible voice. He can speak to us through people. God can even speak through unbelievers. He spoke through a donkey one time to Balaam! God is able to speak through whatever means he chooses.

I think one of the tragedies of the modern church is that individual Christians no longer believe God can speak to them personally. They do not need a priest, or a pastor, or anyone to speak to them for God. They can hear God speak to them personally.

After Paul had this vision the team changed direction and went to Macedonia to preach the gospel.

Acts 16:11-15

After Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia who asked for help the ministry team traveled to that region. A big city in that area was the city of Philippi so they went there. They were strategic in their ministry and went to a large city in the area where the Lord pointed them.

While in that city they were strategic in their timing. They went on a Sabbath day to a place where they knew people gathered to pray.

Lydia heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed. She was baptized and everyone in her house. The scripture says her heart was open to the Lord. She listened to what Paul preached. This is a detail I think is important in evangelism.

Look for people who listen. Look for people who have an open heart to the things of God and who want to know more about the Lord. Not everyone will listen. We only have a short time to reach people for the gospel. We should be strategic in where we go, what time we go, and who we invest our time with.

These verses show us that this missionary team was not random in where they went, areas they targeted, and who they invested ministry in.

How can we reach people today? A lot of people are on the internet. It is a good place to preach God's word. There are many free online services which Christians can use to teach, preach, and share the gospel. At the moment I'm using various platforms for blogs and also I use free video services for audio and video outreach.

Notice, also, that baptism was an important aspect of discipleship. These new believers in the book of Acts were baptized. They were baptized in water, and they were also baptized in the Holy Ghost. There are plenty of examples of baptism in the book of Acts. I believe this and communion are probably the bare essential traditions which churches should continue to maintain. Communion is to remember the Lord's death until he comes. Baptism is a testimony that we have died to this world and we now are in Christ Jesus. We are dead to sin and we are alive to God. (Read Romans 6 for more on baptism).

Acts 16:16-24

Around the same time Paul preached the gospel to Lydia and she was saved there was another woman impacted by Paul's ministry. However, this woman was sent by the devil to disrupt the ministry. She was possessed by a devil and brought money to her owners through a fortune telling business.

As an aside, this should clearly show us that people involved in fortune telling, card reading, and such activity are participating with demons and evil spirits. Stay away from them! Stay away even from horoscopes in the newspaper! This activity is used by the devil.

The demon possessed girl followed Paul and Silas around and proclaimed that they were servants of God showing the way of salvation. Why do you think the devil would do this? Why do you think a devil would want to associate fortune telling with gospel proclamation? This was a strategy of the devil to corrupt the gospel. It was an attempt to associate the gospel with people who were demon possessed and with fortune telling. The enemy has no problem sliding up next to Christians and pretending he is one in order to bring confusion and corruption to the gospel and the church.

Paul would not stand for it. He rebuked the devil and told it to come out of the woman. The woman lost her ability to do fortune telling. What does this tell us? People who have power to do fortune telling do this with the power of demons and evil spirits. Stay away from them! Do not participate in this wickedness. If a person participates in this there is a good chance they will be demonized.

When the owners of the woman realized they could no longer make money from fortune telling they persecuted Paul and Silas. What would happen if the church cast devils out of people in government,

business, and society? What would happen if Christians were full of the Holy Ghost and drove out the devil? It would bring opposition. It would bring persecution. It would also bring revival.

Paul and Silas were caught, tried, and beaten, and thrown into jail. But this is not the end of this story.

What lessons do we learn here? Fortune tellers are demon possessed. People who dabble in the occult risk being possessed by demons and devils. Stay from this! Stay away from anything that resembles evil. Do not associate with people like this, even if they pretend to support the church, ministry, or the gospel. The devil will pretend to support preachers, churches, and ministries in order to infiltrate and corrupt. It takes wisdom from God to discern when this is happening and to drive out the devil like Paul did here. When you cast out devils expect that the enemy will stir up opposition and persecution.

Acts 16:25-34

Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and thrown into jail. The jailer was told to put them in secure lock down so that was what he did. He put them into chains in the dungeon.

What was the response of Paul and Silas to this persecution and injustice? They praised the Lord. In the darkness of that dungeon they lifted their voices to Jesus and praised him.

What was God's response to their situation? God shook that prison with an earthquake and opened the doors of the jail. All of the prisoners could have ran out and escaped but everyone stayed put. Why?

Everyone there, including the jailer, knew this was God. Paul and Silas were from God. Their ability to praise God in this situation was proof of God. And the earthquake was from God. The prisoners did not presume it was in their best interest to run away.

What was the response of the jailer to Paul, Silas, their praise songs, and the earthquake? He was about to kill himself, but Paul stopped him, and told him they were all accounted for. The jailer falls on his knees before Paul and asks him what he can do to be saved.

Paul preached the gospel to this man and he got saved. All of his household was saved. What was the message Paul preached to him? Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and he would be saved and his household. The man believed, and was baptized, and then he helped Paul. He fed them, he bandaged their wounds, and was ready to serve the Lord.

This is an amazing account of events which really happened. Everything we read in this portion of scripture actually took place. How would you feel if you were arrested for preaching the gospel and thrown into a dungeon? Would you react in the same way as Paul and Silas? What would you do if the man who persecuted you asked you how he could be saved? Would you take the opportunity to get revenge? Or would you share with that man how his sins could be forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ?

Salvation is as simple as believing in Jesus Christ. How did this man get saved? He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and he was saved and his household.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

Acts 16:35-40

The magistrates who persecuted Paul and Silas somehow knew they were wrong. They wanted Paul and Silas to be let go and for them to leave quietly.

You have to laugh at Paul's response to them. He actually made them come down to the prison and fetch him personally. He wanted a personal apology for what happened.

And why were the magistrates afraid of Paul now? Because they found out he was a Roman citizen. To understand that you have to understand the history of the Romans. It was illegal to treat a Roman like this. Romans had civic rights. As Romans, you couldn't beat a man unless he was charged and convicted of a crime in a court. Paul was a Roman who was beaten but was not convicted of a crime. The magistrates were smart enough to figure this out. That is why they were afraid. They thought Paul would sue them? Or at least report them to the local Roman centurion's office?

This is an unusual story. We see the response of the people in business, in government, and in society to the gospel. Some people believed the gospel and were saved. Some were angry because of the gospel and others lost money from their shady business. People invested in the work of the devil stirred up the most trouble. They were motivated by love of money to persecute Paul and Silas. Let that be a lesson. If you threaten people's money by preaching the gospel they come after you.

The gospel threatens government, business, and society. It shows us we are sinners. It shows us we are wrong. It shows us this world system is wrong, and we pay a price for rebelling against the Creator.

Jesus paid the price for us, but unless one is willing to accept his offer and believe the gospel we will die for our sins. We will be punished for our sins if we reject the free offer of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Reject Jesus and we condemn yourself to hell. This is why people are angry at the gospel. It is the same reason Cain was angry. They want to tell God what to do. They don't want God telling them what to do.

May God have mercy on us, and help us to humble ourselves. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Acts Chapter 17

Acts 17:1-9

The missionary team traveled to Thessalonica where they followed their pattern of ministry. They went to the synagogue first and preached the gospel. People believed the message, but those who didn't believe stirred up trouble. Everywhere they went they preached the gospel, people got saved, and then persecution started.

What is the Lord teaching us? Success in ministry draws the attack of the enemy. We should always anticipate that success will draw the attack of the enemy. What do we do? We persevere. Depending on the situation, sometimes they would continue right where they were at. Sometimes, depending on the situation, they would flee and escape to another location to continue the work.

The world hates the gospel. People who reject the gospel will not only reject it but seek to overthrow it.

In today's world we see the enemy tries to erase Christianity and replace it with a new social justice religion. This political and social movement today will result in persecution of Christians. This is just another Satanic movement.

God is still in control. The Lord sits upon his throne. No matter what happens in the nations of this world the Lord is still in control. The Lord told us ahead of time what would happen so that when it happened we would believe in him.

Trust in the Lord today. Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Trust in the Lord. He will not fail us. He will carry on to completion the good work he started in us. (Philippians 1:6).

Acts 17:10-15

The brothers in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas away by night to the city of Berea. When they arrived in that city they continued the same pattern of ministry. They went to the Jewish synagogue and preached that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Bereans responded differently than those in Thessalonica. The scripture is careful to point out that the people in Berea were noble and they searched the scriptures daily to see if what Paul and Silas taught them was correct. As a result of their careful study they discovered the truth of the gospel which Paul and Silas preached to them.

The application of this is for us also to search the scriptures daily. We should be like the Bereans who searched the scriptures. What other authority do we have in life? Will we trust our lives to our opinions, or logic and reasoning? Or will we trust in the Bible? I choose to trust in God's word. When we approach the Bible with faith and humility we discover that God's word is true. Let us not be like those in Thessalonica who persecuted the apostles. But, instead, let us be like the Bereans and study God's word.

When the people in Thessalonica heard Paul and Silas were preaching in Berea they went there to persecute them as well. These people did to Paul the same thing Paul did before he was saved. This shows it was not just people in disagreement. There was an evil spirit driving these people to persecute Christians. The same is true today. This evil spirit is still in the world today. It is setting a trap even now to engulf the entire world in a final snare which will almost wipe out humanity if God did not intervene. The Lord will intervene. Jesus is coming back.

The believers in Berea sent Paul away to continue the work in other areas. However, even after Paul left there were still some disciples left to continue the work. For a while Silas and Timothy continued the work even after Paul was gone.

Sometimes our part is to begin a work for God and others have the task to continue it. Sometimes we may have the job of continuing a work which somebody else started. Regardless, we are called to be faithful to the work the Lord assigned to us.

Acts 17:16-21

Paul arrived in Athens and was provoked by flaunted idolatry in the city. He was eager to preach the gospel. He went to the synagogue and also to the marketplace to share God's word. He disputed with

people. This word "dispute" paints the picture of Paul arguing with people. I don't think Paul argued in a negative or threatening manner, but debated vigorously with those who engaged him in conversation. Paul got the attention of the philosophers in the city. These philosophers were interested in any new philosophy or religion. They invited Paul to speak to them and share his doctrine.

The message Paul preached was Jesus Christ and the resurrection. We have other examples in the book of Acts of sermons the apostles preached. They used the written scripture they had, including the law and prophets, to prove Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. They used Bible prophecy to prove Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Jesus Christ is Lord. Paul and the other apostles taught from the Bible that Jesus died for our sins at Calvary, was buried, and rose again the third day. He did not preach a made up story. Everything he preached was rooted in the reality of God's word and historical facts. These things happened. Jesus died on a cross. He was buried. He rose from the dead on the third day.

Notice the elite philosophers considered Paul a "babbler". It is interesting how intellectuals never change. Intellectual people today still look down their noses at Christians who preach the gospel. The pride of man never changes. This shows us something about the unchanging character of fallen man. Without the grace of God every single man is doomed to the consequences of their own pride and unbelief. God shows grace to us by sending people to preach the gospel. Those who will humble themselves and believe the gospel are saved from God's wrath and the inevitable consequences of human pride and unbelief.

Paul preached to all ethnic and religious groups of people. He was ready to preach to the religious Jews. He was ready to preach to the intellectual Greek and Gentile. No matter who he encountered Paul's message did not change. He preached the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who were Jews or Gentiles that believed were saved. God showed no favoritism. Anyone who would believe could be saved. All men are loved by God and have the opportunity to be saved. Man is made in God's image. God loves all men, and it is not God's will for anyone to perish in their sins.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus is saved.

Acts 17:22-34

In Paul's sermon he went straight after the blatant idolatry in the city. He told them it was time to repent of idols and turn to God in repentance. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He appealed to literature the Gentiles knew, and quoted a passage which said we were the offspring of God. Since this aligned with the biblical narrative of man created in the image of God Paul used it to teach that God was our creator. God created all things and cannot be contained by what the hands of men create. Men create gods or idols in their own image or in the image of animals. But the living God created man.

The pinnacle of this sermon was when Paul told them that judgment day was coming. God will judge the world and every man in the world who ever lived. God will judge the world by his son Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead. When Paul got to the truth of the resurrection there were people who mocked him. Others, however, believed the gospel and followed Paul. The names of the believers were listed for us in this passage. How would you like your name listed in the Holy Bible? How would you like God to write your name down in a book that will last forever? Guess what? If you believe in Jesus he did write your name down in a book. That book is called the Lamb's book of life.

In this corrupt generation another truth we want to glean from this passage is this: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth". All ethnic groups had the same origin. We all originated from the same blood. We all bleed red blood. We are all one people, no matter what our cultural, language, or religious background. We are all human beings made in the image of God. This biblical truth cancels out all movements based on racism. It is all a lie of the devil. The Bible has the truth if men will read the Bible and believe what God said.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. He is risen! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

Acts Chapter 18

Acts 18:1-11

Paul left Athens and arrived in the city of Corinth. Here he met Aquila and Priscilla who were also believers in the Lord and shared Paul's vocation of tent making. He stayed with them for a while. He continued to preach the gospel in the local synagogues. Paul experienced success and the Lord gave him a vision to let him know to stay there because the Lord had a work for him in Corinth. In Corinth a church was born and we have two of Paul's letters in the New Testament to this church.

Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth. He continued to preach to the Jews but when they firmly rejected the gospel then Paul declared he would turn to the Gentiles in that area. This was in keeping with Paul's regular pattern of ministry. He would take the gospel to the Jews first, but when they rejected the message he turned to preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

After he left the Jewish synagogue Paul joined a Gentile man named Justus. The synagogue ruler, Crispus, also became a Christian and was baptized. The Lord encouraged Paul through a vision not to be afraid and not hold back but keep preaching. The Lord reassured Paul that no one would hurt him. Paul continued to preach in that area for a year and six months.

The Lord speaks! The Lord spoke to Paul, and he speaks to any Christian who will listen and do what he says. Let us remember that the Lord is involved in our daily lives. Be faithful to do the work the Lord assigns to you to do. Don't be afraid of people and what they might do, but be faithful to God's calling on your life. You never know who God might put in your path.

Some of the people Paul met in Corinth were key people in the church. Aquila and Priscilla were key in God's plan, and probably spent a lot of time on a daily basis with Paul and learned from him and were disciples by him. Not all ministry takes place from behind a pulpit. The people you work with are important to the Lord as well. Family, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, are all important to the Lord. Don't miss out on opportunities to be a witness for the Lord.

Acts 18:12-17

Once again the time came when the Jews tried to rise up against Paul and persecute him for preaching the gospel. However, this time the Gentile government did not go along with the Jews who wanted to persecute Paul.

Their persecution backfired and those who wanted Paul in court got kicked out of the courtroom. When this happened, Paul's persecutors were attacked by Gentiles. The judge over the court, Gallio, did not care. He did not want any of this in his court.

This showed how God protected Paul by using a careless and apathetic judge. The Jews sought leverage against Paul by using the court system but it backfired on them. The Lord is able to protect his people in order to accomplish his will and purpose. The Lord had a purpose for Paul to preach in Corinth and he would see it done. Nobody could stop Paul as long as God wanted Paul in Corinth.

This should give us encouragement. We can be fearless in the face of opposition. If the Lord wants us to endure in a situation he can intervene. He can provide us with the grace we need, and he can work in the lives of even wicked people to help his servants. I've actually seen some of this in my own life. I've seen God use wicked people to help me against their own will. The Lord is able to carry out his work and even use unbelievers sometimes.

The Lord is over all. He is over human judges and courts. He is over the nations, over governments, over all of this world system. The nations are like a drop in a bucket to him. The Lord is king forever.

Acts 18:18-22

Aquila and Priscilla became serious coworkers with Paul. They accompanied him when he left Corinth. Paul traveled through Syria to Ephesus. He spent time there and preached the gospel. He encouraged the church. They wanted him to stay but Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. Paul took off in a ship, landed at Caesarea, and then went down to Antioch. He traveled around and encouraged churches. He helped people as he headed toward Jerusalem.

When I read these details of Paul's travels it reminds me that God has different seasons in our life. We may live in one place for a while, and then travel on to another place. There are different seasons in life. We may not always know why or understand what we have accomplished in a particular place. Sometimes the enemy has attacked me with the thought that I've never accomplished much because I've moved around a lot in my life. Moving around a lot does not mean a person is unstable. It might mean that God has a purpose for certain people to go to various places, like Paul did. The world measures stability with their own measuring stick. But the Lord has a different way of measuring our lives. We can trust in the Lord with our lives, even when we ourselves don't understand why we have lived in so many different places.

Paul was interested in visiting different places in order to bless the church and encourage believers. He had a heart to bless and build up the church in all the places he went to.

May the Lord give us a heart to be a blessing to the church as well, and that we would seek to intercede and pray for God's people.

Acts 18:23-28

After Paul finished in Antioch he traveled on throughout the region, in Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen and build up the disciples.

Meanwhile we are introduced to another man who preached the gospel. This man was Apollos and he was bold in preaching the gospel in the synagogue, but he only knew the gospel as far as John the Baptist preached. Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and disciplined him and taught him the gospel more fully as they learned from the apostle Paul. Apollos graciously received their instruction and grew stronger in the Lord and continued to preach the word. Apollos mightily convinced the Jews publicly from the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Paul mentioned Apollos in his letters to the Corinthians. God raised up more men like Paul to preach the gospel. Paul was happy about this because he understood that this was not the job of just one man. Paul looked at himself and Apollos as fellow workers in God's field. They would plant the word in people, and then God made that word grow and bring forth life in those who heard and believed. This showed Paul's humility and also he had to correct the churches about lifting up one man over another man. Of course, looking back through church history we see that by and large the church has not understood this word from Paul. Most of what we see today as denominations is a result of Christians following after men.

We should work together for the building up of the Lord's church. Unfortunately, most Christians I've met have no interest in working together with others. They would rather have their own castle and sit as ruler over their own little church. There is little cooperation happening.

Perhaps this will change. The world is in a state of upheaval at the moment. Perhaps this upheaval will bring the church to repentance and humility and there will be room enough for all God's workers to do the work which God called them to.

Acts Chapter 19

Acts 19:1-7

The Pentecostal position that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is an additional experience beyond or outside of initial salvation is supported in these verses.

Paul came to Ephesus and found certain disciples who were believers. What did it take to be saved? Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. These people were described as "disciples" so they were saved. They were Christians. But they were not baptized in the Holy Ghost.

Paul preached to them the full gospel. They were then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. After this Paul laid hands on them and they were baptized in the Holy Ghost. What was the evidence that they were baptized in the Holy Ghost? They spoke in tongues and prophesied.

I'm sure this passage is shoe horned into the systematic theology of those who do not believe speaking in tongues is for today.

However, if a common man read this passage with no preconceived ideas or systematic theology I believe he would easily see what I see. This passage demonstrates that Christians were baptized in the Holy Ghost way past the day of Pentecost. The evidence that they were baptized in the Holy Ghost was speaking in tongues and prophesying.

There are a lot of Christians out there who work real hard to remove the supernatural from the modern church. Those who reject the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues twist these scriptures. These scriptures speak plainly. A common man who read this would believe.

This is why church can be dangerous, and it can be dangerous to study systematic Bible theology. It is better to read the Bible for yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to interpret God's word for you.

Have you received the Holy Ghost baptism since you believed? Are you a Christian but never had this supernatural experience of the baptism of God's Holy Ghost? Have you never spoken with tongues? Have you never prophesied? Do you have no desire in your heart to experience all that God has available for you in his finished and completed work?

Zechariah 4:6, *"...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."*

Ephesians 5:18, *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"*

Acts 2:39, *"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call."*

Acts 19:8-12

There is a pattern repeated through the book of Acts. People were given an opportunity to hear the gospel and believe, but if they aggressively rejected the gospel Paul moved on. I think this is a good example to follow. There are people who are given chance after chance to believe the Bible but reject it. It is time to move on to other people then. Don't continue to witness to people who repeatedly reject the gospel. Pray for them and move on.

I think this is a mistake we can make with our families sometimes. Naturally, people love their family members, but there is a point that we need to stop witnessing. It can actually hurt people if we keep after them. Pray for them and wait for the Lord to soften their hearts. They may never receive the truth, and we have to come to grips with that reality. Not everyone will believe the gospel and be saved.

We only have so much time to preach the gospel and share God's word with people. If the ground we plant in does not respond to the seed then we move on to other ground that will receive God's word. Some people tend to get stuck in a situation where the enemy drains them of all resources. It is time to move on.

This takes wisdom from the Lord. Don't let the enemy condemn you if you move on to a new situation because of the gospel. When people reject the truth then we need to move on to a new situation where we can help people who will receive.

Acts 19:13-20

The name of the Lord Jesus was famous by this time. Sons of Sceva thought they might add the name of the Lord to their toolbox of spiritual powers. However, they did not fully comprehend the spiritual power they dealt with. When they attempted to drive out demons with the name of Jesus they came against demons who did not recognize their spiritual authority. This teaches us something important about spiritual warfare.

What was the lesson? It was not good enough to attach the phrase "in Jesus name" at the end of prayer. The person who invoked the name of Jesus must also live for the Lord Jesus. We must be "in Christ Jesus" in order to have the authority of his name. Someone who tried to use the Lord Jesus like a magical word finds that it will backfire, as these men learned. The Lord Jesus is not a magical word. He is a person. Those who have his authority are those who live for him.

Another lesson we can learn is the reality of demons. These demons spoke and knew who Jesus was and they knew who Paul was. Demons have knowledge of people and knowledge of the spiritual world. When people seek out spiritual knowledge outside of God's word demons will oblige. They lie, deceive, and destroy anyone who seeks them out. This is why God's word forbids people to practice witchcraft and fortune telling. These demons will destroy anyone who seeks them out. I've heard enough testimonies of people who were saved out of that lifestyle that I don't want any part of it. I am content with God's word, the Holy Bible, and trusting in God for my life and future. My life is in God's hands. I don't need to know what will happen to me. All I need to know is that God will provide for me, he will protect me, and he will be my portion forever.

There is power in the name of Jesus to cast out devils, but the person who tries to do this better be living for Jesus themselves. Make sure you are underneath the Lord's authority in your life before you try to exercise the authority of the name of Jesus. We need to make sure our life is totally surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody is perfect, of course, but you know if you are in Christ. The Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you belong to Jesus.

Remember God's word. **James 4:7**, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)

Acts 19:21-41

By this time in his life Paul knew that he would go back to Jerusalem and after that he wanted to go to Rome. He sent for some of his fellow workers who were Timothy and Erastus.

Meanwhile there was a silversmith named Demetrius in Ephesus who realized Paul's preaching the gospel hurt his business. These silversmiths made shrines for the false god Diana. Demetrius organized a protest against Paul and his fellow workers who preached the gospel. As a result, a mob formed and there was confusion everywhere. This is a device of Satan. When you see mobs like this you can know that the devil is in the middle of it. Anywhere people are in the streets rioting and protesting you can be assured the devil is not far off.

This angry mob directed their fury towards those who preached the gospel. They chanted praise to their false god Diana. This shows us how men seek to overthrow the truth of God. They replace the gospel with a false religion. We see this demonstrated in modern America with the movement to create a false religion of social justice. People build a social religion out of racism and other lies and delusions of the devil.

Ultimately all protests and riots are not what they appear. These people appeared to be promoting Diana, but the real spirit behind them wanted to destroy Paul and his fellow coworkers. The evil spirit tried to stop the proclamation of the gospel in Ephesus. Underneath what you see in America is an attempt to destroy Christians and to stop the gospel in America. This is at heart an attack against

Christians and the church. Don't be deceived by what you see on the surface. The true spirit behind anarchy and rebellion is always an attack against God and God's people.

Paul wanted to preach the gospel, but his friends stopped him from risking his life. He probably would have been killed by the mob. Paul's attitude shows us the true attitude of Christians. They want to proclaim the truth, and tell people about Jesus. The true answer for the world, and society is not protest but proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Acts Chapter 20

Acts 20:1-6

Paul traveled to various cities. Where he went the Jews followed and persecuted him. There was a growing number of disciples who were coworkers with Paul in the ministry. They helped in practical ways by providing material support and assisted him in the work. Paul slowly made his way toward Jerusalem. Some of the people listed were also mentioned by Paul in his letters to the churches.

What does this tell us about the Bible and these events? This is a record of historical facts. We have a list of cities, towns, regions, people. There is a lot of detail provided that could be verified. If the Bible was not true it would not include such information which could be verified. We have a wealth of information to provide historical proof of the truth in the Holy Bible.

One reason Paul moved around was that he returned to churches he went to before. A lot of these churches he helped start. He returned to these churches to encourage, exhort, and build the faith of the believers. His goal was to build, encourage, and comfort God's people. This should be our goal today as well. We are to pray for the church, share God's word, and seek to build, encourage, and comfort God's people.

I am strengthened in my faith in the message of the gospel by reading this passage. The Lord Jesus was crucified on a cross outside Jerusalem. He died on that cross. He was buried in a rich man's tomb. He rose from the dead three days later. He was seen by his disciples and apostles. He ascended back to heaven after he gave them instructions. We are told that Jesus will return to earth in the same manner he left. He will return. He will establish his kingdom upon this earth and rule over the nations with a rod of iron. Just as surely as these historical events were true, so also the future events spoken of by the Bible will also happen.

Acts 20:7-12

A young man, Eutychus, listened to Paul preach so long he went to sleep and fell out of a window. He was dead when he hit the ground. But Paul went down and the man revived. He was dead from the fall, but came back to life when Paul went down to retrieve him. What did they do after this? Paul went back to preaching until the morning and then he left. This true story is "stranger than fiction". It happened.

What can we learn from this? We get a glimpse into a church that stayed up all night listening to Paul preach the word to them. These people did not have a church service like modern people think of church. These people were meeting in homes, eating meals together, and preaching the word of God all night long.

The supernatural happened in this church. It was a common occurrence for miracles to happen. Here was a man who died during the church service and then came back to life. Everyone just continued with the church service. They had a meal and then Paul continued preaching until morning.

Our modern "play" church has no resemblance to this primitive church. This church was born in the fire of the Holy Ghost, but today we live in the smoke of man-made tradition and ceremony. May God deliver us from dead religion and raise us to new life in the Spirit in these last days. Perhaps our modern church needs to fall out of a window so it can be raised to new life and so continue until the day dawns and the morning star arises in our hearts.

May the Lord's will be done. May we see revival again in our day.

Acts 20:13-16

Here are more details of Paul's travel arrangements. The part which stands out to me in this section is the determination Paul had to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. Why was Paul determined to get to Jerusalem? Why did he need to get there by the day of Pentecost?

I think the reason Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost was because of the opportunity this presented for preaching the gospel. As we know from the beginning of the book of Acts people from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost. This was the same time of year the Holy Spirit fell upon the original apostles and early church and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke with tongues, and prophesied. It was on that day Peter preached and many people were saved. Perhaps Paul saw this as another opportunity to preach the gospel and win many souls into the kingdom of God.

As we have seen these ministry teams were strategic in outreach. They tried to reach as many people as possible with the gospel. They had a regular pattern in ministry of going to the local Jewish synagogue, preaching the gospel, and depending on the response, continue in that town or they would leave for the next town.

I think this is exactly what we see here in Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem. His desire was to reach as many people as possible at that time of the year in a city where many people would be gathered from all over the world.

The great commission is to reach all the nations with the gospel. Going into the city of Jerusalem was a strategic way of reaching all those nations.

May the Lord give us wisdom today on how we can reach as many people as possible with the gospel.

Acts 20:17-38

In this section we come to a turning point in Paul's ministry. He told the elders from Ephesus that he would not see them again. He was going to Jerusalem and he knew that difficulties and persecution

awaited him there. However, he was not moved by the prospect of difficulty but determined to finish the work which the Lord Jesus gave him.

Paul testified that he had a clear conscience about his ministry among them. He did not covet anyone's material resources, but instead he supported himself and those who were with him. He did not take from them but he gave the gospel and his own life.

He warned the elders from Ephesus that men would infiltrate the church and try to lead people astray. Paul called these men grievous wolves and men who would speak perverse things to deceive people and make disciples out of people in the church. Paul could have been speaking about all of church history, because this prophecy was played out many times in church history and still today.

Paul prayed with them, cried with him, hugged them, and then said goodbye to them. He knew he would not be back to that place again. He knew his future was in Jerusalem and in Rome.

There are different seasons in life. We may spend years in one location serving the Lord but then he moves us on to another place. We have to remain flexible and open to where the Lord wants to take us.

Despite knowing that he faced difficulty Paul was determined to obey God. We have to make that same decision. No matter how hard life may get we must determine to keep walking by faith and trusting in the Lord Jesus. The Lord will get us through. He is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion forever.

Acts Chapter 21

Acts 21:1-7

On Paul's journey to Jerusalem he met Christians who warned him about what was in front of him at Jerusalem. Paul's trip plans are given to us in an exact list of cities and towns he went through and the route he took toward Jerusalem. These Christians warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Did Paul make a mistake? I've heard preachers say Paul was wrong in his determination to go to Jerusalem. I disagree. The Lord Jesus told his disciples they would suffer from religious persecution. It is part of serving the Lord Jesus in this hostile world system.

I think the Holy Spirit told Paul what was in front of him in the same way the Lord Jesus warned his disciples that they would suffer tribulation in this world. It was to be expected.

The Lord told us about it ahead of time so that when we face opposition we will not be surprised or offended. (**John 16:1**). The Lord told us ahead of time so we could decide for ourselves if the cost was worth it to us. For Paul, no matter what the price, he was willing to pay it so he could fulfill God's calling on his life.

People who say Paul was wrong in his determination to go to Jerusalem are the same as those who think that suffering should not be a part of the Christian life.

The Psalmist taught us that affliction was part of God's work in our life. Before I was afflicted I went astray. But now (that I have suffered) I have learned to keep God's word. (**Psalm 119:71**)

Suffering is like a fire which burns away the chaff in our lives. It removes the things of this world which hinder us in serving God. Suffering helps us to get a clear perspective on what living for Jesus is all about.

This is why I have always enjoyed about reading biographies of Christians who went through trials and came out with a strong faith.

It gives clarity when we see that God's word is true no matter what we suffer or go through. God's word does not change. God sustains us in every trial we face.

Jesus said in this world we face tribulation. (**John 16:33**) But we can be of good cheer because Jesus overcame this world. And in him we too have overcome the world.

Acts 21:8-16

As we previously saw the Lord continued to paint a grim picture for Paul of what waited him in Jerusalem. Isn't this what the Lord said he would do? Way back when Paul first got saved the Lord Jesus spoke to Ananias and said, "*...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" (**Acts 9:15-16**). This just was a further confirmation to me that it was God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit confirmed what the Lord Jesus already said.

The Holy Spirit used prophets to graphically portray what would happen to Paul after he arrived in Jerusalem. The Lord let him know what would happen. Why does God tell us ahead of time when bad things will happen? He does so in order to prepare us. He does so that we choose to continue the road to Calvary. The Lord does not hide anything for those who serve him. **Genesis 18:17**, "*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;*"

The Lord revealed his secrets unto his servants the prophets. The Lord did not hide what he would do. The Lord speaks to us even to this day. Those who listen to the Lord and obey him will hear him speak. Jesus knows his sheep. His sheep hear his voice and they follow him.

The Lord used prophets in the church then and still does today. I think it is a tragedy that men promote false doctrines in the church which deny that God can speak to us today. It is a tragedy that people in the church deny the work of all God's gifts to the church.

Philip the evangelist was one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles to look after tables. Philip was one of those deacons who served alongside Stephen the martyr. Now we learn more about him and his house. He had daughters who were prophets. We see from this that prophets are men and women. Prophets are not over people in the church. They are not in authority in the church. They are not leaders in the church. They come alongside leaders in the church in order to build, exhort, and comfort God's people. This is similar to the function of prophets in the Old Testament how you often see their ministry of speaking to kings in order to build, exhort, or comfort.

The ministry of the prophet is rejected so many times. But we see here the ministry of prophets was active in the primitive church. It makes me wonder what happened that people deny the gift of apostles and prophets today? I wonder why we went astray on this?

Paul was determined to continue on the path he was set on. This was God's will for Paul. God spoke to him, let him know what would happen in order to prepare him, and gave him the resolve to continue forward no matter what.

May the Lord give us this same resolve in our life and ministry to go forward no matter what opposition we face.

Acts 21:17-26

The apostles in Jerusalem received Paul gladly when he arrived. Paul shared with them what happened through his ministry among the Gentiles. When they heard Paul's report they glorified the Lord.

There was a strange turn in this account. The leaders in Jerusalem were concerned about the multitude of Jews who became believers in Jesus but still held their Jewish tradition. These Jewish Christians did not like Paul because they thought Paul was against the Jewish people. Of course, this was a misunderstanding and a twisting of Paul's message.

The enemy always takes some small controversy and turns it into the only thing people know about a man or his ministry.

However, we know from the record in this book of Acts that Paul went so far as to circumcise Timothy to avoid this controversy. Paul did not tell Jews to stop being Jews. He was against Jews telling Gentiles they needed to become Jews in order to be a Christian. Becoming a Jew to become a Christian was not the gospel. Paul was against those who tried to make Gentile Christians into Jews. It was not needed, it was not necessary, and it was dangerous.

Eventually, the Jewish culture evaporated from the church as it went forward. The church started out Jewish, but it soon outgrew that old wine skin. As Jesus pointed out, new wine must be poured into new wine skins. You cannot pour the Holy Spirit into old religious traditions and culture.

They asked Paul to prove to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that he did not preach against Moses. They asked him to perform some Jewish tradition in the temple, and Paul agreed to do so. As far as it was in Paul's power he wanted to live at peace with all men. He did not want to be a stumbling block to prevent other people from coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

As we shall see, however, this act of appeasement would backfire. You can't really change people's minds once they decide what they believe. People decided they did not like Paul. This was something promoted by the devil. Religious cities and buildings attract evil spirits. The fastest way to destroy people is through the promotion of false religion and spiritual delusion.

Paul followed their instructions and did what they asked him to do. He humbled himself and was willing to submit to the advice of brothers in Christ. Paul already knew, though, how this would end up. He knew because the Holy Spirit already showed him what would happen.

Acts 21:27-36

Paul almost completed the seven days at the temple when Jews from Asia spotted him. From the description it sounded like they spied on him and finally caught him in the temple. They made false accusations against him and stirred up the crowd to riot against Paul. Paul might have been killed then by the mob but Roman soldiers heard the commotion and intervened. They chained Paul and took him to the castle to save him from the mob.

Here was the beginning of what the Holy Spirit said would happen to Paul in Jerusalem. Paul tried to appease the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem but was detected by the Jews. These Jews were against Christians like Saul of Tarsus had been and they were determined to take out Paul. They might have thought he was their ring leader.

All the city was moved. This one man, Paul, inspired an entire city wide riot. That is kind of amazing if you think about it. The devil was so threatened by the ministry of Paul that he stirred up the entire city to kill the apostle Paul.

The early church was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. As a result, those who did not believe were filled with Satan. There was no neutral ground in the battle. Do people today think there is neutral ground in this spiritual battle? There is no neutral ground in the battle against the powers of darkness. The devil and his demons will never repent or change their mind. (**Revelation 9:21**). They are determined to destroy man and do all they can to hurt God.

As we saw with the Lord Jesus all the evil men do God turns around for good in order to bring about great salvation. It was through this tribulation which Paul endured that the gospel was spread from one end of the world to the other and through Paul's years of suffering in prison we have his letters which make a major part of the New Testament. All things work together for the good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. (**Romans 8:28**).

Acts 21:37-40

The Romans who intervened and rescued Paul from the crowd did not know who he was. Paul talked to the chief captain and asked to speak. The chief captain was surprised he could speak Greek. He thought he was an Egyptian trouble maker. Already they made assumptions on who they thought Paul was. After Paul explained to him that he was a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, he was given permission by the Roman captain to speak to the people.

Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned to the people with his hand. When the crowd was quiet Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue.

After the crowd nearly beat him to death Paul's only thought was to share his testimony. He wanted the people to be saved. This was the same attitude Stephen had when he preached to the Jews who persecuted him. This was the same attitude Jesus had on the cross when he prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified him.

Any true Christian who has the Holy Spirit living in him will love his enemies. This is the attitude and heart of God. God loves us, even though we are enemies against the Lord. He died for us even when we

were still his enemies. He has provided forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God the Father. We have been washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Paul understood the people who persecuted him. He was one of them. He did the same thing they now did to him. If anyone understood them it was Paul. This was perhaps another reason why he was determined to preach the gospel to them. He desperately wanted them to believe the good news. He knew how Jesus changed his life. His desire was for each person in that crowd to be saved just like he was saved.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts Chapter 22

Acts 22:1-21

The crowd was quiet for a few minutes to listen to Paul's defense. Instead of defending himself he gave his testimony of how he was saved. Why did Paul do this? Because he understood exactly why they persecuted him. He did the same thing once. He also persecuted Christians and was there when Stephen was martyred. He knew how much Jesus changed his life, and his heart went out to these people that they could also hear the voice of the Lord, and receive salvation, and believe upon the name of Jesus.

They listened to him to a point. When Paul mentioned the gospel would go to the Gentiles they turned on him again. This crowd was against the Gentiles, as well as Jesus, and if Paul would bring the gospel to the Gentiles they would oppose him. This was a pattern of opposition consistent through the ministry of Paul. His greatest enemy when he preached was the Jewish people. They would follow him from one city to another in order to oppose him and his message. However, this did not change the fact that the gospel went first to the Jews and then also the Gentiles. The Jews were still loved by God. God still had a plan for the nation of Israel. One day all Israel will be saved. (**Romans 11:26**).

Paul did not defend himself. He defended the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's one thought was for the salvation of the people who wanted to kill him. He understood them, he loved them, and he would have them saved like himself. Later Paul would express this love for his fellow countrymen in **Romans 9:1-4**.

Anyone who hates the Jew because of their persecution of Christians does not understand the love of God. God loves his enemies. Jesus prayed for those who crucified him that God would forgive them, because they did not know what they did. There is a spiritual blindness upon Jews from the time of Christ until now. We cannot understand this. But it is not a reason to hate these people. They are loved by God. And God's promises to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled.

May the Lord give us a heart to pray for Israel. We are commanded in the Bible to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May God fill our heart with love and compassion for this nation and people that are so loved by the Lord.

Acts 22:22-30

When the crowd would not be pacified by Paul's speech the Romans took him and would beat him. However, Paul knew it was not lawful for them to beat a Roman citizen. He informed them of his citizenship. This had a remarkable effect upon them and they did not beat him. They released him. Paul told them he was a citizen of Rome by birth. The captain released him from chains but kept him in custody. They had to find out what the commotion was about so the Romans brought Paul to a religious meeting of the Jews.

This back and forth between Jews and Romans reminds me of what happened with the Lord Jesus. What principle does this teach us? In order for persecution to happen against Christians there must be some kind of moral outrage which then leverages the power of government to sanction persecution against Christians.

I wonder if this is what we see right now in America with the outrage. There is a new religion of social justice. This religion is of the mob and Christianity is rejected. It is the religion of the mob and anarchists. It is sweeping through every aspect of America. It will only be a matter of time before this is funneled into persecution against churches, God, Christians, and anything resembling Western Judaeo-Christian culture.

What is our response? It is the same response Paul had. It is the same response Jesus had. Our response is to walk in love, mercy, grace, compassion, and forgiveness. It is our job to continue proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel which has the power of God to change people. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can truly change a man's heart. The root of the problem is not racism or injustice. The root of the problem is sin. Men worship themselves. Outrage, anger, and violence is just another form of self worship. It does not solve anything but only throws gasoline on the fire. This is what the devil wants. He wants it to just all burn to the ground. But the solution for America is simple. Repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. Only the Lord Jesus can change us and save us.

Acts Chapter 23

Acts 23:1-11

The Romans brought Paul to a religious council to figure out what he did to stir up a riot. The first thing Paul said was that he lived in good conscience before God.

What did this mean? Did it mean Paul never sinned? Did it mean he was morally perfect? No, it meant Paul obtained forgiveness of his sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew Christ died for his sins and had risen again from the dead. Death no longer had any power over the Lord Jesus and no longer had power over those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

When Paul stated this the high priest commanded that someone punch him in the mouth. Paul then rebuked the high priest. Paul didn't realize he was the high priest, and retracted his rebuke when someone told him the man was a high priest.

At that point Paul saw his way of escape. Half those gathered were Pharisees and half were Sadducees. There was no better way of distracting a crowd like this than to get them focused on what they

disagreed on. Paul knew they would argue over their theological differences. They would forget all about him. That was exactly what he did, and it worked. It worked so well the Romans came back to rescue Paul again because the council started to riot.

The Pharisees were on Paul's side because they believed in angels and spirits, but the Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural. As a result of the dissension the chief captain got Paul out of there by force and brought him back to the castle.

The Lord stood by Paul. Perhaps Paul was tempted to get discouraged by all of these events but the Lord said to him, "*Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*" With this word from the Lord Paul knew he would not die in Jerusalem. He knew he would testify in this city, but that he would also travel to Rome to preach the gospel there also.

The Lord knows when we need a word of encouragement. I've experienced this a few times in my life. When I needed God to encourage me and comfort me he was always faithful to show up and help me. The Lord is touched by the feeling of our weakness. He knows we are dust. God's love never ends and his mercy is new every morning. Great is his faithfulness. Amen.

Acts 23:12-22

A group of forty Jews swore an oath that they would not eat food until they murdered the apostle Paul. This should give us a clear picture of how insane the persecution against Christians was in the early church. Is it like that today? From all indications, even though you never hear about it in the news, there is just as much persecution against Christians today as there ever was in the past.

These men made an oath to kill Paul. They placed themselves under a curse that they would kill Paul or they would not eat food. Of course, the plot failed, because the Lord would not allow it to happen. If those who swore this oath stood by it then they all died from starvation.

How was this plot foiled? A relative of Paul heard about it and sent a young boy to tell Paul. Paul sent the boy, by way of a guard, to the chief captain to tell him about this plot. God used a boy to put a stop to the plan of the Jews to kill Paul.

The history of Israel is filled with accounts of God delivering his people. The book of Esther is a good example of how God delivered his people out of the hand of their enemies and even brought the plot of the enemy back upon them.

Paul was not worried. He had a word from the Lord that he travel to Rome. He knew that whatever plot the Jews came up with it would fail even though it would cause him to suffer for a while as he remained in captivity. This protective custody of the Romans turned into a long imprisonment for Paul but also provided opportunities to witness to small and great alike of the Lord Jesus.

No weapon formed against us shall prosper. All those who rise up against us shall fall. I will not fear what the devil may bring. Why? Because I am a child of God. Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

Acts 23:23-35

The chief captain supervising Paul's situation commanded a small army to escort Paul to Caesarea. This was for Paul's protection but also an effort to transfer this problem up the chain to his superiors.

His superior was Felix. Felix asked Paul what province he was from since he was Roman. Paul said Cilicia and Felix agreed he would hear his case when the accusers arrived.

The letter the chief captain sent to Felix was partly true. He gave himself credit for rescuing Paul because Paul was a Roman but the fact was the man did not know Paul was a Roman until he was about to beat the truth out of Paul.

He used this letter as a way to legally cover his own mistakes but also provided Paul with a small army to protect him from the assassins who waited to kill him.

Felix kept Paul in Herod's judgment hall.

One step at a time Paul was closer to the goal of Rome. God intended to use the Roman government to provide Paul with protection, provision, and a means of transportation across the world to the Roman capital.

This solution took time. There was an extended period which Paul spent in custody with the Romans before he was sent to Rome. During that time, Paul shared God's word and his testimony with people. He had a chance to witness to small and great men. This was according to God's will.

The Lord told him the destination but did not tell him how long it would take or by what means he would get there. This is an important lesson for us. We don't always know the means whereby the Lord is going to get us from one season in life to the next. He will do it, that's for sure, but we don't always know in what way we will get to this next chapter of life.

If God has to use an army and the government to get us where we are supposed to be then he will do it. In the days of Jacob and his sons God used a world wide famine to move the sons of Jacob down to Egypt. God can accomplish his will in our life by whatever means he wants to. At times, he may move mountains to get you where you need to be. Trust in the Lord, and continue to walk by faith. The Lord is faithful and he will see to it.

Acts Chapter 24

Acts 24:1-9

The Jews brought accusations against the apostle Paul. What were the charges? Sedition, a leader of Christians, and profaning the temple. Tertullus said the Jews would have handled Paul themselves if the Romans had not inserted themselves into the situation.

What was being said was mostly lies. Paul was not guilty of sedition or profaning the temple. The only thing said here which was true was that Paul was a leader of the Christians. The solution that Jews had for Paul was martyrdom. But the Lord was not yet finished with the apostle Paul.

The Lord promised Paul he would show him how he would suffer for his name. Some people say that Paul suffered because of his sins, but that is contrary to the gospel Paul preached. What is the gospel? Christ died for our sins, he was buried, he rose again on the third day. The Lord Jesus took upon himself the punishment of all our sins. When we repent and put our faith in Jesus all of our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Our sins are removed from us as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered no more by God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Why did Paul suffer? Because he lived in a world that hates God. The religious and secular arms of the world system are dead set against the living God revealed in Jesus Christ. They will not accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet he is the one in whom God has said will sit upon the throne forever. Jesus is King forever and ever. There is no other king. Anyone who does not believe the gospel will suffer the punishment of their own sins. When we reject the free offer of God's grace then we accept the responsibility of our own sins. We pay for our own sins. The penalty for our sins will not be satisfied even after an eternity in the lake of fire. There is no end to the punishment of sin. God will never stop hating sin. He will not stop hating anyone who rejects his son Jesus Christ. There is no end to that punishment. It is eternal.

This is why every person needs to cry out to Jesus and be saved. It is the mission of every born again Christian to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. We only have a short time to preach the message. The night is coming when no one will be able to work any longer. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 24:10-21

Paul's defense went straight to the heart of the gospel. His only desire was the opportunity in this court to lift up the name of Jesus Christ and make everything in this court about the gospel.

Paul said he stood there because of his faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I doubt the Jewish lawyer Tertullus expected Paul to use this occasion as a pulpit for preaching the gospel.

This was in keeping with what the Lord Jesus promised would happen when Christians were put into this exact situation. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would put words in the mouth of Christians who were examined in this manner.

The Holy Spirit points to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lifts up the name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the wisdom to testify and preach the gospel in any situation they are in. The Lord stood with Paul and strengthened him so the message would be heard by Jew and Gentile in that court room.

Notice Tertullus made this all about Paul and Paul made this all about Jesus. Tertullus was focused on Paul but Paul did not think about himself. Paul thought about the Lord Jesus who spoke to him on the road to Damascus. Paul remembered the word of the Lord Jesus and his heart filled with the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Does our heart burn with the message of the gospel? When we have an opportunity to share God's word with others what do we talk about? Do we talk about ourselves? Or do we talk about Jesus?

Jesus Christ is Lord. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose from the dead on the third day. God the Father placed us into Christ. The Lord Jesus is our righteousness, wisdom, and sanctification. He is all we need.

Acts 24:22-27

Paul was held for two years in protective custody of the Romans. Felix kept listening to Paul's account over and over. The scripture says that Felix hoped for some kind of bribe from Paul. However, there was a point at which Paul's preaching got to him and he could not take the conviction. Felix trembled and dismissed Paul and said that he would call for him at a more convenient time. Obviously Felix had no motivation to release Paul or let him go, and so kept him in custody. He was not unkind to Paul and allowed Paul's friends to minister to his needs, but would not allow him to go free.

This situation might seem unjust and unfair to Paul but remember that Paul served the Lord in this situation. He was not there for himself or to forward his own agenda. He was there in service to the Lord Jesus. During that time when he testified to Felix there was no doubt people in that place listened to the gospel and were saved. People became Christians right under the nose of Felix in that courtroom.

The time came when Felix was replaced by another man named Porcius Festus. Felix could have let Paul go but the scripture says he left him in custody to show the Jews a favor. This shows how fickle and unreliable this man was.

Justice does not come from men no matter what their position is. True justice only comes from God and it only comes in God's time.

What would happen if Paul got justice from God? He would have been struck down a long time before this because he killed Christians and persecuted the church. What if men always received immediate justice? Not many men would be left on the face of the earth.

The Lord Jesus demonstrated God's justice upon Calvary. He died in our place. Those who want justice should look to Calvary. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He satisfied God's wrath for all of us. Instead of crying out for justice, we should humble ourselves and cry out for God's mercy upon ourselves and everyone we come into contact with. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Acts Chapter 25

Acts 25:1-9

The same plot to kill Paul on the road between Caesarea and Jerusalem was attempted again under Festus as it was when the chief captain originally sent Paul under protection to Felix. Festus assumed his role in this region. While he was in Jerusalem the Jews tried to persuade him to have Paul transported to Jerusalem, and their plan was to kill Paul on the road. Maybe Festus knew this was their plan. He did not give in to their request but told them to meet him in the courtroom at Caesarea where Paul was already kept in protective custody.

When Festus got to Caesarea he called the court into session and brought out Paul. The Jews were there to accuse and slander Paul to Festus. Paul denied their charges, and the Jews could not prove their accusations against Paul.

Festus was inclined to give in to the Jews and have Paul transported to Jerusalem. Maybe Festus knew the plot and did not care but was willing to go along with the Jews to get Paul off his plate and out of his court.

Again, we see an innocent man is falsely charged and kept in custody for years for no reason except the corruption of those in power. Sound familiar? It is the story of the human race. It has never changed through all of history.

Do men's hearts cry out of justice? God's desire for justice is even greater than man's desire for justice. His justice is eternal. All those who break God's law will face an eternal sentence of punishment in a lake of fire. What are the crimes of those in the lake of fire? Scripture says that all liars will have their part in the lake of fire. Have you ever told a lie? Are you sure you really want justice?

Jesus satisfied God's justice upon the cross of Calvary. Anyone who looks to the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary and believes he died for their sins will receive pardon from God. The Lord washes away our sins in the blood of his Son Jesus Christ.

Anyone who rejects the gospel will indeed get justice to their eternal regret and anguish.

Acts 25:10-12

Earlier there was an incident where 40 men waited to kill Paul on the road while he was transported between Caesarea and Jerusalem. This was under the rule of Felix. Now Festus arrived and the Jews wanted to do the same thing again. Paul knew about it. Festus knew about it, too. Why did Festus even ask Paul if he would agree to be transported back to Jerusalem? Probably because Festus could care less if Paul was assassinated by the Jews. Paul would not agree to be a martyr for the Jews, though. He appealed to Caesar, which meant he asked for the judgment of someone over Festus. I get the impression that appealing to Caesar was a risky choice to make for Paul (or he would have already done it under Felix), but now he had no choice left. Also, the Lord told Paul he would go to Rome. I wonder if Paul imagined he would travel to Rome as a prisoner on a slave ship?

This ability to appeal in court shows the Romans had a sophisticated system of justice. Roman citizens were protected by law, and could be tried, and appeal their cases in a court of law. I would imagine that a lot of what we have in our modern system of justice is derived from the Romans as well as the Greek civilizations.

Festus agreed to Paul's appeal and allowed Paul to be sent to Caesar. However, before he left, Paul would have an opportunity to testify in front of other Gentile kings.

Believers in Christ have a way to make appeals. We can take our petitions directly to God the Father because of what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us through his death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. We have been provided with pardon and forgiveness because Jesus took our place upon the cross. God the Father declared us not guilty because of what Jesus did for

us. Turn to God in repentance and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 25:13-22

King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to salute Festus. While they visited Festus told them about Paul's case. He shared how Felix left Paul behind as a prisoner. When Festus was in Jerusalem he was approached by the Jews about Paul's case but did not immediately hand Paul over to them. Instead, he allowed a court to be held at Caesarea to hear Paul's story. Festus was ready to hand Paul over to the Jews, but to escape that death sentence with the Jews Paul appealed to Caesar. As Festus told this story to Agrippa he called Caesar "Augustus". Festus held Paul until arrangements were made to send him to Rome. Meanwhile, Agrippa asked Festus if he would also hear Paul. He had no idea what he was in for. All of the Gentile rulers put themselves under the influence of a gospel preacher like no other.

These men were responsible for the gospel Paul preached to them. Because of their pride and position they thought they were the ones judging Paul. But it will be the gospel Paul preached which will judge them one day. This was also true when the Jews and Pilate judged Jesus. They will all be held accountable for the truth that Jesus told them. He told them he would come back on the clouds and every eye would behold him. Jesus will return to judge this earth and all the nations one day.

Paul's departure from Caesarea approached and his trip to Rome. However, before he went, he had another opportunity to preach to those unsuspecting kings.

What opportunities do we have to share the gospel? If we desire to share God's word with people the Lord will send people across our path. There has never been a time like today to share the gospel. Make the best use of the opportunities that you have to lift up the name of Jesus.

Acts 25:23-27

Notice how the arrival of Agrippa and Bernice was described as "great pomp". In other words, it was like the circus came to town. This was a great show for people. Not only were Agrippa and Bernice invited but all the chief captains and principal men of the city. What was happening here? It was entertainment, and the show was put on by Festus for Agrippa and all these big people in the city. Who was the star of the show? None other than Paul the apostle. No doubt to the minds of these people Paul was no more than a clown in the circus to them. This demonstrates the pride of men in the face of the most important message they would ever hear in their lives.

Festus said this show was for the purpose of gaining more information so he could write an informed letter to Caesar when he sent Paul to him. Do I think this was really the case? I doubt it. All of these people were liars, deceivers, and corrupt. You can't believe anything these men said. Remember how the chief captain Lysias lied in his letter to Felix earlier? These men were clever at rewriting history and events to make themselves look good.

The heart of the plot was the Jews wanted Paul dead. However, the benevolent Festus had not found Paul worthy of death. Unfortunately, Paul appealed to Caesar, and so Festus was following the rules in sending Paul to Rome.

No matter what motive men had the Lord had Paul center stage for his own purpose. It was God's will for Paul to preach the gospel to them. God wanted them all to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. They would never be able to say after that day they did not hear the truth. God did not leave himself without a testimony. No one can say they didn't know the truth. God will not allow men to justify themselves by saying they never heard the truth. They hear it, and they reject it.

What is truth, Pilate asked. The truth is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to find God but through Jesus Christ. Call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

Acts Chapter 26

Acts 26:1-23

The Lord Jesus said Paul was a chosen vessel to testify before the Jews and the Gentiles. Paul shared his testimony before the Jews, and now he shared with these Gentiles kings the same testimony. There are a few verses here that make this testimony a little bit different.

One difference is **verse 18**. The Lord spoke to Paul, and told him how his life would be used by God in preaching the gospel. *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."*

This verse is packed with life changing truth. Let's open this up and see what we can find in this verse.

First, men in their natural state are in darkness and under the power of Satan. The entire Bible teaches this from Genesis all the way through Revelation. Man without God is in darkness and is under the power of Satan. What is the answer to this problem?

How can man be delivered from darkness and from the power of Satan? By turning to Jesus Christ by faith.

What happens as a result of turning by faith to Jesus Christ? Men receive the forgiveness of sins, and they also receive inheritance. Also, notice here that sanctification is by faith. Some think that salvation is by faith and they are right about this, but they assume that sanctification comes through self effort or trying to obey God's laws. It is not. Sanctification is by faith in Jesus as well.

Most people can understand forgiveness of sins but what does the word "inheritance" mean? This points forward to the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be a part of that kingdom. We will participate in the Lord's government over the nations of this world and over the universe. God has a plan to give those who believe in Jesus the opportunity to participate in a future we cannot even imagine yet. What will it be like when Jesus Christ sits as king over all the nations on this earth? We are going to find out. Those who have put their faith in Jesus will have some part in that kingdom.

The gospel gives light to those who are in darkness. When we hear the gospel, and receive the message, and believe the good news then light comes into our soul. We begin to see the world and everything around us the way it truly is. We understand people as they really are and not who they pretend to be. We no longer deceive our own heart in thinking we are something that we are not.

Remember, Paul was preaching to Gentile kings who were deep in the darkness of this world system. He almost persuaded Agrippa to become a Christian. What would it mean for Agrippa to become a Christian? It would probably mean loss of his position and power in the world system. But what would he gain? He would have the forgiveness of his sins and inheritance in God's kingdom.

Another verse which stands out to me is **verse 23**, "*That Christ should suffer; and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*" Christ died for our sins upon Calvary. He was buried in a tomb. He rose from the dead on the third day. By faith in what Jesus accomplished our sins are washed away, and we have hope for a future in God's kingdom.

Acts 26:24-32

Festus interrupted Paul and called him crazy. However, Paul defended himself and said he spoke words of truth and soberness. Despite the interruption from Festus, Paul turned his attention toward King Agrippa.

Somehow Paul knew Agrippa believed the Bible. He appealed to his faith in the prophets in the Bible. It was upon the basis of the prophets that the early church preached the gospel. In almost every sermon you read in the book of Acts the apostles appealed to the authority of Old Testament prophets. Bible prophecy is a strong argument for faith in Jesus Christ.

Agrippa told Paul he almost could persuade him to become a Christian. Paul said it was his heart's desire that everyone who heard him become a Christian like him.

After Paul's speech everyone discussed Paul's situation. They all came to the conclusion that Paul was innocent and should not be in prison. However, because Paul appealed to Caesar he would remain in the Roman system until he was transported to Caesar.

Paul had an opportunity to preach to the Jews and after their rejection of the message the gospel went to the Gentiles beginning at Jerusalem and Caesarea with these Gentile Roman rulers. Paul testified to small and great alike the gospel of Jesus Christ. He shared his testimony and he preached the gospel.

What is your testimony? Do you know the gospel?

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts Chapter 27

Acts 27:1-12

The apostle was accompanied by his fellow workers on the voyage. Paul found favor, not only with his former guards, but also with the Roman centurion. These verses outline the beginning of Paul's sea voyage to Rome. At one point he advised them against proceeding any further because he knew by the Spirit there was danger for the ship and men. Per usual, men do not take heed to God's man but instead

listen to the worldly wisdom of those put in charge. As a result, they continue the voyage which will soon met with disaster.

It stands out to me that God used Paul to warn them of danger. Oftentimes God used his humble servants to warn men of the danger in their lives. Christians are salt and light in this world, and by their life and words they warn sinners of the impending judgment of God. God will hold each man accountable for his life.

Unfortunately, these warnings often fall on deaf ears. Why? Because men are too busy paying attention to the professionals and the experts. They listen to the intellectual, the educated, the sophisticated who say there is no life after death, there is no heaven, no hell, no judgment. They try to calm the conscience of men with their lies about evolution and that everything was created from an explosion out of nothing.

Yet men still die every day and go to the judgment of God. As scripture warns us plainly. **Hebrews 9:27**, "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" But do men listen to this warning? No, they would rather take their chances with the deception of reincarnation. But what is the truth? The truth is that we die once. And after we die we give an account of our lives to God.

How do we prepare to meet God? Turn to God, humble yourself, and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Call upon the name of the Lord. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Acts 27:13-26

As Paul predicted, a storm came up which threatened to destroy the ship and the life of the men in the ship. However, in the middle of this crisis upon the sea, the Lord sent an angel to speak to Paul. The angel told Paul that he would complete this trip and witness to Caesar. He also told Paul that God graciously would save the lives of every man on Paul's ship. Paul shared this message with the men on the ship, in order to build them up, to exhort them, and to comfort each one of them. Paul told them they would be saved, but lose the ship, and be cast upon a certain island.

Did they believe Paul now? It seemed their heart was open to hear from the man of God now that their lives were in danger.

Men's lives are in danger. Every single day life is in danger. Our lives are so fragile on this earth. You never know what a day may bring forth. This has been driven home to me recently with news about someone in my family who has been struck with a life threatening illness. It serves as a wake up call for everyone when we see how fragile life is on this earth.

The Lord provided salvation for everyone who believes the message. To all who hear the message, and receive, and believe, they are saved. The Bible says whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Storms come into every man's life. God has a purpose in allowing storms into our life. It is to get our attention upon what is the most important thing of all: faith in God. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. Cry out to God most high, and unto God who does all things for us. He is mighty to save.

Scripture says the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. No matter what we are going through today God is our provider, our protector, and our portion forever. Amen.

Acts 27:27-44

When the ship was in crisis the man of God took leadership.

The situation onboard the ship deteriorated quickly. People quit eating because they were afraid. As Paul predicted the ship approached some kind of land. The sailors used their skills to determine how close land was. At one point the sailors tried to escape the ship but Paul intervened. He told the soldiers to not let them escape. The soldiers cut the ropes on the lifeboats, and made sure everyone remained aboard until they crashed on an island.

Paul encouraged everyone to eat food. He prayed over the food and ate and everyone followed his example.

The ship crashed on the island and everyone made it out alive by swimming or floating to shore on broken pieces of the ship.

The Lord told Paul everyone would survive the crash. There was a point, however, in which those sailors who did not believe but wanted to take their lives into their own hands might have perished. Paul had to intervene with the soldiers to stop the unbelieving sailors from accidentally killing themselves. They had to stay with the ship.

When people are afraid or panic they tend to take their life into their own hands. But it is at those moments we need to trust in God and remember the word he gave us. God promised to save us if we will keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. If we will believe and trust in the Lord we will survive and make it through the storm. We may have to crash somewhere but the Lord will help us overcome.

Listen to what God says. What is his word for you today? What is God saying to you today? Do you have God's promise in your heart and mind? Are you trusting in him with all of your heart?

Don't let fear get into your heart. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. People will not understand your faith, but they don't have to. You answer to the Lord and the Lord asks you to trust in him today.

Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

Acts Chapter 28

Acts 28:1-10

They made it to shore and the natives treated them with kindness. They made the survivors a place of shelter and also a campfire so they could get warm and dry. Paul gathered firewood. A snake jumped out and bit Paul. When the natives saw this they assumed Paul was a murderer and that justice did not

allow him to escape. However, when he did not die they changed their mind and thought he was a god. This was not the first time people reacted to Paul with superstition.

God used Paul on this island to heal people and bring them to the knowledge of the Lord. This was what Paul prayed for. He prayed his journey to Rome would be a prosperous journey in the will of God and that was what happened.

What is our definition of prosperity? A Bible perspective on prosperity would be the salvation of the people on that island. And if it took a shipwreck for Paul to bring the gospel to that island then so be it. How did God get twelve sons of Jacob to Egypt? It took a worldwide famine for seven years. What did it take to get God's people out of Egypt? It took plagues and the miracle of the Red Sea dividing. What does it take for God to move in your life? If you have even a small faith then God will move mountains to accomplish his will in your life.

The fact this snake did not hurt Paul reminded me of the Lord's promise in **Mark 16:18**, *"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."*

Also, this reminded me of **Luke 10:19**, *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

The Lord protects his servant. Those who commit themselves into God's hands and obey his will for their life can expect for God to provide for them, and protect them. He is our portion forever. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

The Lord has stomped the head of the serpent. Satan has been defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Death has been defeated. We are in Christ Jesus and are more than conquerors through him who loves us. Stand upon God's promises, continue to believe and trust in the Lord, and do not give up. Do not give in. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Acts 28:11-15

After three months on the island they found transportation on another ship which sailed toward Rome. We can read their travel route and stops along the way in these verses. One part which stood out to me was **verse 15**, *"..whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.."* This stood out to me because we just looked at how Paul encouraged everyone on the doomed ship. God used Paul to make sure everyone got safely to shore on the island. He also helped the people on the island and healed their leader.

Now, we see the human side of Paul. He was just a man, and he needed to be encouraged by his brothers in Christ just like we all do. Even the greatest apostles need to be encouraged and receive help from others. Never underestimate your gift and calling in the church. You may not be an apostle or prophet, but if you have a gift of encouraging others you are very important to God and the church. Paul was at a point where he needed the encouragement of the brothers who found him.

Paul was now in Italy and we are almost to the end of the record of Paul's missionary journeys. As we approach the end of the book of Acts let us reflect on God's faithfulness, how God provides for us, how God protects us, and how God always fulfills his promises to us.

What was the most important thing in Paul's life? His goal was to preach the gospel and bring as many people as he could into the kingdom of God. God used Paul for this purpose, but observe carefully how this looked for Paul on the ground. On a daily basis, Paul lived a hard life. Are we prepared in our heart and mind to endure hardness for the sake of Christ? Are we prepared to be misunderstood, slandered, rejected, and cast out? Are we prepared to endure persecution? Are we willing to accept God's provision in ways which are unpleasant or stressful?

Through it all, the lesson I learn from Paul's account is the Lord's faithfulness to always stand with him in every situation. The Lord never left Paul. He was with him in every trial and every trouble. The Lord stood with Paul, so that the message of the gospel could be fully known to great and small alike.

Acts 28:16-31

When Paul arrived in Rome he was not treated like other prisoners. He was given his own separate living quarters with one Roman soldier to keep an eye on him. The first thing on Paul's mind was communicating with the Jews in Rome. This was in keeping with Paul's pattern of ministry. He would always take the gospel to the Jews first, and then he would go to the Gentiles.

The Jews in Rome had no idea about how the Jews in Jerusalem wanted to kill Paul. They never received any letters, and there was no one with Paul on the ship who said anything bad about him. This shows that the Lord was able to shut the mouth of the devil. Paul had a clean slate with these Jews and was eager to preach the message to them.

They scheduled a specific date and a lot of the Jewish people showed up at Paul's house to hear his message. He taught them the gospel out of the Old Testament. Using the law and the prophets he taught them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He proved to them from Bible prophecy that Jesus is the Messiah, that he died upon the cross for our sins, that he was buried, and rose again on the third day. He also no doubt shared with them his personal testimony which we have heard several times in the book of Acts.

As always there were some who believed and some who did not believe. Paul gave those who did not believe a warning from the scriptures about their unbelief and rejection of the message. In this way, Paul fulfilled his duty to his own people in preaching to them the good news of Jesus Christ. It was not up to Paul if some believed or some did not believe. It was only Paul's job to preach the word and let people decide themselves if they would believe the truth.

This is all we can do. We are to be faithful to lift up the name of Jesus Christ. We are to be faithful to proclaim the good news.

All men are sinners. Our only hope to receive forgiveness of our sins is by putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what he accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. The work that Jesus accomplished for us brings justification, sanctification, and glorification to anyone who will believe and call on the name of Jesus. Not only do we receive forgiveness of our sins but we have the opportunity to participate in God's plan for the future. Jesus will return to this earth and reign over all the nations. He will reign as king. We

will have an opportunity to participate with the Lord Jesus in this kingdom. We can scarcely imagine what this all means yet.

My prayer is that you will hear the good news, and turn to God in repentance, and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This is the purpose of this entire Bible commentary that I have written.

I pray this commentary will build you up in your faith, encourage you to continue to study God's word and obey what he tells you, and also be comforted by the Holy Spirit in all the troubles you face in life.

Lift up your eyes. The Son of God will appear in the sky one day. The Lord will return for his people. He will heal us, and bring us into his house. He opens the door to us and he says, "Welcome home." Amen.

The Epistle to the Romans

Romans Chapter 1

Romans 1:1

This greeting contained Paul's description of who he was and his work. Paul described himself as an apostle separated to the gospel of God.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He accomplished this through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. It is good news to everyone who believes the message. This good news contains the promise that everyone who believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ receives eternal life.

In order to proclaim this message Paul's life was separated from everything else. He was consecrated to accomplish this one task. He could not do anything he wanted to do, but he would fulfill the calling the Lord Jesus gave him. He was no longer free to follow himself, but was instead a servant of Jesus Christ.

There are only two choices in life. Either we are a slave to self and sin, or we are a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no in-between ground. There is only light and darkness. There is only Christ or the enemy of God. We must make our choice. If we make no choice, then the choice is made for us, and the default choice is that we are slaves to self and sin.

Let us instead choose that we will serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Renounce all idols, beliefs, philosophies, or religions which contradict the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:2

God promised the gospel before time began. In the Bible the Lord promised the gospel. Where do we find the gospel in the Old Testament? The heart of the gospel is receiving eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where do we find resurrection and eternal life mentioned in the Old Testament?

Read **Job 19:25-26**. The Old Testament pointed to the suffering of the Messiah on behalf of the world. John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. **Psalms 22** and **Isaiah 53** point to the suffering of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 1:3

It was known by many that Messiah was the Son of David. Jesus was called the Son of David by common people. The religious leaders rebuked him when he allowed people to call him the Son of David. **Mark 10:46-47** is an example of when a blind man called Jesus the Son of David. In **Matthew 21:15-16** the religious leaders were angry with Jesus when he let people call him the Son of David. Also, read **Matthew 22:41-46**.

Jesus is the Son of David. He is the Son of Man. He is the Son of God. This is what the religious leaders could not accept. They refused to believe this man who stood in front of them was the Son of God. If they accepted Jesus they would have to renounce their position. They would not do this because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They loved power more than they loved the truth who stood in front of them. The same is true today.

Romans 1:4

How do I know Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. God declared Jesus is the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. This is the heart of the gospel. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

Jesus is the Son of God and He is also God the Son. He is one of the three persons of the one God. God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God in three persons.

We see in John's gospel that Jesus was called the Word of God and that he lived with God and is God. Read **John 1:1-5** and **1 John 1:1-3**.

In the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry the devil tempted Jesus in respect to being the Son of God. He repeatedly called into question who Jesus was and tempted Jesus to prove he was the Son of God. Read **Matthew 4:3, 6**. When the Lord exposed demons they would call him Son of God. Read **Matthew 8:29**. When Jesus was on the cross the religious leaders attacked him in regard to Jesus being the Son of God. Read **Matthew 27:40, 43**. These scriptures reveal that the devil attacks the teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Walter Martin was a preacher who wrote the book "Kingdom of the Cults". One thing he said in his writing was that all the cults have one common characteristic. All the cults deny that Jesus Christ is God the Son. They deny that Jesus is God who came in the flesh.

This was what John also taught us. Read **1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7**.

Jesus is the Son of David. Jesus is the Son of Man. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God the Son. Jesus Christ is God.

Romans 1:5

Paul did not say that he was the only one who received grace and apostleship, but instead "we" have received grace and apostleship. There is a sense in scripture that there were twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus. Those original twelve he chose and then also there was Matthias chosen by lot and also Paul. We also see Paul listed apostles in a list of gifts provided to the church. Read **Ephesians 4:11-12**.

There are men today who fulfill the gift of apostle. I don't mean they have authority to write a new Bible or add to the Bible. However, they are apostles for edifying the church. These gifts exist for the perfecting of the saints and the edification of the body of Christ.

Why would we not have these gifts? Do we have evangelists? Do we have pastors? Do we have teachers? Then why would we not have apostles and prophets as well?

Notice Paul mentioned all nations. Paul was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles. His gospel went to the whole world of unbelievers, and not just to the Jewish people. The gospel went first to the Jew, but it was also for the Gentile.

The church is Jews and Gentiles combined into a new body of believers. The message of the gospel is for all nations. Read **Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 3:3-6**.

Why did Paul preach the gospel to all nations? It was for the name of Jesus Christ. For his name. It was not for the promotion of Paul's name, but was for the name of Jesus Christ. It is the goal of the Christian to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

Romans 1:6

The Christians in Rome were called by the Lord Jesus Christ. From every nation the Lord called those who were his. We see in the future kingdom there will be saints from every nation. (**Revelation 5:9**).

Our primary identity is in Christ. It is not country, culture, society, language, or skin color. Our identity is in Christ Jesus. In Christ all these barriers were done away. We are one people in Christ Jesus. Read **Ephesians 2:13-19**.

The devil causes men to hate one another based on secondary issues such as race, color, language, culture, and society. It is Satan who causes people to rise against one another, to kill one another, and to overthrow one another. This violence is the work of Satan. Jesus exposed the work of the devil. Read John 10:10. The thief Jesus pointed to was the devil. The devil is a thief, a murderer, and a destroyer.

A Christian does not want any part in this. This world system is not our home. Our purpose is to proclaim the gospel to as many as will hear. Be faithful to hold fast the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

Romans 1:7

This church in Rome was not founded by the apostles Paul or Peter. It was a church which appeared spontaneously and perhaps began on the day of Pentecost when men from Rome were in Jerusalem.

It did not matter to Paul that he did not start this church. They were beloved of God and called saints. Notice the "to be" before the word "saints" is inserted by the translators, and is not necessary to the

meaning. Saints are not super spiritual Christians performing miraculous feats or extraordinary acts. Instead, ordinary Christians are saints and beloved of God.

Paul extended the blessing of grace and peace to these Christians. This was a greeting which was both Gentile and Jewish and appropriate for the church. The church is both Gentile and Jew combined into one new man.

The gospel is a message of peace. Paul taught in **Ephesians 6** to put on the feet the gospel of peace. The Lord gives peace to his people. **Read Psalm 29:11.**

Paul taught the Lord will give us peace which passes understanding. Have you ever felt a deep peace in the midst of circumstances where everything seemed like it was falling apart? I have experienced this and I knew it was the peace Paul described. Read **Philippians 4:7.**

Romans 1:8

Paul gave thanks for the church. He gave thanks to God through Jesus Christ for them. The faith of the church in Rome was spoken of throughout the whole world.

When he wrote this letter Paul had not yet visited them but it was his goal. He heard of their faith, and he knew everyone heard about the faith of the Christians in Rome. Were these extraordinary Christians? What was it that made them so unique and different that their faith was spoken of throughout the world?

What is the faith of true Christians? The Christian faith is simple. We believe God sent his Son into this world to be the Savior of the world. Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins. He died, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead. He arose from the dead. This is the faith of Christians and it was talked about throughout the whole world.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Jesus said it began in Jerusalem, would spread to Judaea, and Samaria, and to the end of the world. This was exactly what happened.

Remember to give thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with love for everyone who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. We give thanks for everyone who believes in Jesus, and pray that our faith be spoken of in the whole world.

Romans 1:9

There is a pattern in Paul's letters of praying for churches, giving thanks for them, and interceding for them. This is the work of every Christian: to pray for the church, and to give thanks for each one. This is a work we are called to continue and never stop. We should always have an attitude of prayer and intercession for the church.

Here are some examples of Paul exhorting us to pray: **1 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.** He told the Thessalonians he prayed for them, and also commanded them to pray without ceasing.

This means we never stop praying on a daily basis for the church. It does not mean we pray twenty four hours a day, but that when we pray we remember the church in our prayers. Paul went more in-depth on

exactly what he prayed for the church in other letters. In each example there was always the principle of thanksgiving in prayer.

Some examples of Paul's prayers: **Ephesians 1:15-23; Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:3-11; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:9-14; Colossians 4:2-3.**

Romans 1:10

In the book of Acts we see Paul made it to Rome. The Lord provided him with transportation on a Roman slave ship as a prisoner in chains. Paul described his prayer request to God as a "*prosperous journey by the will of God*". I believe the Lord answered this prayer.

Today we have a different idea of what prosperous means. From the viewpoint of eternity Paul had a prosperous journey to Rome. He was shipwrecked on an island and had opportunity to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of the island. People were brought to the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of Paul. Even the Romans who guarded Paul were impacted by his life, testimony, and message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did have a prosperous journey by the will of God when he traveled to Rome. Most people today would not consider being a prisoner on a slave ship a prosperous journey but from the perspective of eternity it was a prosperous journey. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was preached to those who never heard the message. People were brought to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should ask the Lord to help us redefine what we think of words like "prosperous" or "prosperity". Do we immediately think of money? If we do then we are brainwashed by the world system.

The Lord answers prayers especially when it pertains to preaching the gospel. However, when he answers prayers it may come in a way which is unexpected. Remember to give thanks when the Lord answers prayers and acknowledge answered prayers.

Romans 1:11

A spiritual gift was meant to establish believers in their faith. This means to be settled, grounded, and confident in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be established in faith in Jesus means we no longer waver. We are not moved by the unbelief of people around us.

Paul covered spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthians 12-14**. The greatest gift built up the church. Prophesying is the greatest gift because it builds, edifies, and establishes believers. Read **1 Corinthians 14:3**. This is what prophesying should do. A prophet will have a heart to edify, exhort, and comfort God's people.

Keep in mind the goal of spiritual gifts. The goal is for establishing believers in their faith. Knowing this prevents using a spiritual gift inappropriately. Our purpose should never be to make a name for ourselves, but to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

Let us be established in the faith and learn the proper use of spiritual gifts: edify, exhort, and comfort the church.

Romans 1:12

Paul looked forward to being encouraged by their faith as much as he looked forward to imparting to them a spiritual gift. No matter what our work is in the church we continue to need others. We are all members of one another and need the faith of others to help us in our faith. (**1 Corinthians 12:12-27**)

Each Christian needs to encourage others but also needs to receive from others. In this way each one is encouraged by the other person's faith. Jesus said where two or three are gathered in his name he is there with them. (**Matthew 18:20**). Christians work together to fulfill God's purpose and goal. Christians rarely serve alone but usually with at least two or three others.

We see this pattern when Jesus sent his disciples in pairs. We see this pattern in the ministry of Paul. We see this in Paul's letters when he often mentioned those working with him. He mentioned their names in the greetings of his letters.

We will go through seasons when we are alone. Sometimes a Christian goes through seasons when he is alone. A man of God certainly will face times of loneliness where God is dealing with him. Yet the Christian always longs for fellowship where he can be encouraged by the mutual faith of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Romans 1:13

Paul was confident his message would produce good results in the Roman Christians. He planned many times to travel to Rome but was hindered. He knew if he could reach them his ministry would produce results in the same way the gospel impacted other Gentiles.

Confidence in the gospel for any preacher cannot be understated. We should memorize the gospel and repeat it to ourselves every day. If we are not completely infused with the message then as we encounter human need and suffering we will be tempted to turn aside to man-centered methods or tools in dealing with challenges.

There is only one God ordained method for dealing with man's problems: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Man has one problem and this is sin. The sin problem is the root of all suffering in life. We are separated from God who provides for us and protects us. As a result, those who do not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ are doomed to provide and protect for themselves.

This work of providing for self and protecting self results in worship of self. We worship what is created more than the creator, and the final result is God's curse of death, destruction, and wrath.

Paul is confident that the message of Jesus Christ will result in the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. It will produce the fruit of eternal life. Here are more scriptures where Paul uses the "fruit" metaphor: **Romans 7:4-5, Romans 6:22, Galatians 5:22-23**.

Though Paul did not plant this church in Rome he planned to water it and therefore participate in their joy. This points back to Christians mutually benefiting from each other's faith in Christ.

Romans 1:14

Paul was not in debt to anyone in the sense that he owed money. Instead, the idea of a Christian debtor was what Paul mentioned later in **Romans 13:8**, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*" The Christian owes a debt of love to every man because of the great love God has shown to us.

Paul was a debtor to Gentiles because he was ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ as an apostle to them. Read **Romans 11:13, Acts 9:15-16**.

In those days anyone who did not speak the Greek language was considered a barbarian. Paul said he was a debtor to everyone who spoke Greek, but also to every nation that did not speak the Greek language. Paul understood the gospel was a universal message for every nation, language, tongue, and people. Not only was this message for those considered wise in the world system, but it was also a message for those who were unwise. We see Paul put this into practice when he preached the gospel to a runaway slave in the letter to Philemon. Paul preached to kings and to runaway slaves. He was a debtor to every man to preach the gospel.

How does this apply to the Christian today? We are debtors because of God's love shown toward us. As we received freely from God we should freely give to others. We should proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ free of charge and make known his word in all nations.

The Lord Jesus gave the church the great commission. Read **Matthew 28:18-20**. We are ambassadors for Christ, compelled by the love of Christ, to preach the message of God's reconciliation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:15

I have heard preachers who said they did not prepare sermons but just stood up and relied on the Holy Spirit to give them words. They base this idea on the Bible verse where Jesus said not to think ahead of time how to answer someone but rely upon the Father to provide words. Read Matthew 10:19-20. In the context, however, what Jesus described was Christian persecution. Christians were arrested and brought before secular judges or kings. Jesus taught his followers not to worry how they would defend themselves. Father God gave them what to say at that moment. In other words, we can count on the Holy Spirit to give us supernatural wisdom in extraordinary circumstances. I do not think this means men called to preach God's word should not prepare themselves through Bible study.

This is not the way we are taught by Paul or the Lord Jesus. Not only Paul, but also Peter taught us to always prepare to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope we have. (**1 Peter 3:15**). Paul also exhorted Timothy in this regard. Read **2 Timothy 4:1-5**.

Romans 1:16

Christians today have difficulty remembering the gospel. Their minds are filled with news about sodomites, murderers, and lying politicians. This is not what we need to fill our mind with. Put away the news and get into God's Word! Remember Psalm 1. Meditate upon the word day and night.

Everything in the world system is designed to make a Christian ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The world system is against God and against His Son Jesus Christ. We need to understand this, and make

the decision that if we die proclaiming the truth the last words on our lips will be "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ".

If a Christian does not understand anything else in the Bible he needs to have the gospel of Christ deeply embedded in his heart and mind.

We need to wake up in the morning and remind ourselves: "Jesus died on the cross for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day". We need to remember God the Father placed us into Christ Jesus (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) and united us together with Christ in crucifixion (**Galatians 2:20**), death (**Romans 6:3**), burial, (**Romans 6:4**), and resurrection (**Romans 6:5, Ephesians 2:5-6**).

Paul outlined the gospel message for us. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"*

The gospel is the good news that we are saved and receive eternal life through faith in what Jesus Christ did for us.

Romans 10:9-13, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Let us never forget the gospel. Do not be ashamed of the gospel but be prepared to participate in the suffering which comes from sharing the truth with people. Read **2 Timothy 1:7-8**.

It is the greatest privilege a man could ever have to be entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a great honor if the occasion arises that we suffer for sharing the gospel. Read **Acts 5:41-42**. If anyone suffers for sharing the gospel they receive a reward when they enter the kingdom of God. Read **Luke 6:22-23**.

Let us not waver, be afraid, or be ashamed of the good news. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes!

Romans 1:17

Paul also quoted this scripture in Galatians and in Hebrews. Read **Galatians 3:11** and **Hebrews 10:38**. This quote is taken from **Habakkuk 2:2-4**.

The phrase *"the just shall live by faith"* ties together Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews in presenting the gospel of grace and peace. Salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

There are religious movements which attempt to drag Christians back into bondage to Old Testament law, commandments, and ordinances. The overcoming remnant of God's people hold tightly to the gospel of justification by faith.

We are not saved by law. We are not sanctified or glorified by God's law. The purpose of God's law was to shut the mouth of the sinner who attempted to defend himself against God's wrath by doing good works. (**Romans 3:19**). Try getting a human judge to wave your crime because you did good works. He is not interested in your good works. The human judge will convict you because of your crime, even if you have done many good works. In a similar way, you cannot justify yourself before God by your good works. Salvation is by faith in Christ.

Salvation is complete. From justification, sanctification, and glorification it is by faith in God's promise and God's gift in Jesus Christ. Every aspect of redemption, justification, sanctification, and glorification is God's work which he accomplished through His Son Jesus Christ.

Justification by faith is developed in the book of Romans. It was proclaimed also in the book of Galatians, and held forth to Jewish Christians in the book of Hebrews.

This gospel of grace and peace is the only hope of salvation. The gospel is entirely the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

How do I apply this to my life? Make up your mind to firmly reject the teachings and doctrines of any man, church, movement, or organization which attempts to mix in the Jewish law in the Old Testament with the gospel of grace given to the apostles, especially the gospel we read Paul preaching in Romans and in his letters.

The just shall live by faith. We are saved by faith. We grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith. We receive entrance into God's Kingdom, not because of works which we have done (**2 Timothy 1:9**), but completely because we believed upon God's Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way to enter heaven or to please God. Read **Hebrews 11:6**.

Romans 1:18

Whether or not men will acknowledge it everyone knows about the wrath of God. Everyone knows in the deepest part of the conscience that God's wrath is against our ungodliness and unrighteousness. Some are successful in hardening their conscience so that they no longer feel this wrath of God, but God puts this knowledge in every person.

When we defend ourselves when corrected we give evidence of our knowledge. In some people the sense of God's wrath is highly developed even as children.

Some children when faced with the prospect of going to the Principal's office in school will experience a dread in their hearts. It makes them sweat and have an uneasy feeling in the pit of the stomach. If you have ever stood before a judge or before another man who has authority to enforce or execute judgment in your life then you have experienced a taste of God's wrath. These experiences are a mild taste of the wrath of God.

A normal person is accused by their conscience when they disobey the law of God written upon their heart. They know they deserve punishment and wrath. This wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Men hold the truth in unrighteousness. When I meditated on this I was reminded of how the devil quoted the word of God to Jesus when he tempted the Lord in the wilderness. He had God's word in his mouth. But the truth in the devil's mouth became a lie. He held the truth in unrighteousness. He used truth to further his campaign of deception. This is what men do. They use truth to weave lies and deception and delusions.

Men delude themselves and use God's word to accomplish this. It is the most dangerous spiritual deception I've seen. I sometimes read comments on YouTube after I watch a video sermon. It is amazing to see how people can take God's word and completely twist the meaning of what the speaker said and what God's word says.

Peter mentions this phenomena as well. Read **2 Peter 3:15-16**.

Men twist scriptures to their own destruction. Men deceive themselves by taking God's word to justify themselves and their sin.

James also pointed to deception which people get into by being hearers of God's word but not doers of God's word. Read **James 1:21-22**.

God's wrath is on people who live in their sins, who do not repent, and who refuse to believe and submit to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wrath of God abides upon them.

Men are objects of God's wrath by nature. (**Ephesians 2:3**). Salvation is escaping from God's wrath. There is only one way for us to escape the wrath of God. This way is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (**John 14:6**) We can receive forgiveness of our sins by putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 1:19

"Manifest" means plain, open, clearly visible to the eye or obvious to the understanding; apparent; not obscure or difficult to be seen or understood.

What can be known of God is clearly visible to men. Man is made in the image of God. It is one thing for men to deny the Bible, but it is quite another thing to deny the truth which is clearly visible to the eye and obvious to the understanding. God designed man and also the world around us. The entire creation testifies of the design of the Creator. Read **Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:7, 18, 21-24**. These verses from Genesis teach us that man is made in the image of God. God created man and then he created a woman out of man. God made mankind: male and female God created them.

When men reject the truth of God they reject the obvious truth of God's design in how man is made. God made them male and female. When men deny this truth they have gone beyond denying the Bible. They deny the obvious truth in creation itself.

God showed us who he is through creation. God revealed himself through man who is made in the image of God.

When Satan is able to deceive mankind to the point where men deny the obvious truth of creation then man crosses a deadly line in the sand.

When men are so deceived that they can no longer acknowledge the truth then there is no longer any hope for men. It is at this point fire fell out of the sky upon Sodom. It is at this point a flood came to destroy the earth.

There is no doubt in my mind we are living right now in the day which Jesus described before his second return to earth. Read **Luke 17:26-30**.

Romans 1:20

Years ago a friend and I visited a county jailhouse weekly to share gospel tracts, pamphlets, and pray for those who joined us. Sometimes the prisoners asked questions I could not answer. I kept the questions in mind and researched in the Bible. One question asked was how could God send the savage to hell if he never heard the gospel.

I did not have an answer at the time. Eventually the Lord showed me here in Romans chapter 1 the answer. Read **Romans 1:20**. No man has any excuse. No one will be able to stand before God on judgment day and say they did not know God. Men try to deny God's existence, but even the atheist knows God exists. Why devote one's life to denying the existence of someone unless you actually do believe he exists? This shows the folly of atheists. (**Psalm 14:1**).

The character of God and who he is can be seen by creation around us. Those who pretend they cannot see this are lying. They chose the lie of the devil over the truth of God. However, though men may deny God they still won't have an excuse on judgment day. God holds us accountable. Men are without excuse.

I'm confident if any man wants to know God then God will reveal himself to that man. God can speak to that man. God can reveal his son Jesus Christ to that man. This does not diminish the responsibility of Christians to carry the gospel to every nation.

An example of this was when an angel appeared to the Roman centurion and told him to call for Peter. (**Acts 10**).

This was a Gentile who believed in God but did not know the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord intervened for him so he could hear the gospel from the apostle Peter. This is a good example of my point that if a man wants to know God then he can know God. God will reveal himself to a man who sincerely seeks for him.

Romans 1:21

God gave mankind the ability to turn away from him. This is called free will. When men do not acknowledge God or glorify God, or thank him for what he provides, then a process begins. Failing to

glorify God and not thanking God causes a process of erosion. This process does not stand still. Our hearts fill with unbelief and our minds are molded by the ideas of the world system.

The world system exalts itself against the knowledge of God. When we fail to glorify God or thank him then our minds become as vain as the world system. Our minds become fixated on the temporary, transient things the world system produces and offers.

We become vain in our imaginations. Our minds are devoted to making money and believing self-centered philosophies and ideas. We eventually get to the place where we think the entire world revolves around us and our needs or desires.

When a man gets to that point his foolish heart is truly darkened. Notice whenever the Bible uses the word "fool" or "foolish" it is in connection to unbelief and living for self.

Paul repeats this principle again in Ephesians. Read **Ephesians 4:17-19**.

The unbelieving mind is filled with vanity. The understanding is framed by the darkness of the world system. They are separated from God through ignorance which is the result of a blind heart. Progressively they lose the ability to feel conviction of their true condition and so give themselves more and more to immorality.

They knew God at one time. Every man knew God, but by our choice to live for self we are separated from the knowledge of God. This separation produces an increasingly vain framework of thoughts. It erects thoughts which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. It hardens the heart. A hard heart is in the breast of a person who loves self, provides for self first, and protects self. Their prize is self. They defend themselves at any cost, even when there is no threat. The way of the transgressor is truly a hard way to live.

It is not too late to repent, to give up excuses, and confess our sins to God. Forsake all other religions, philosophies, and opinions, and put your entire trust and faith in Jesus Christ alone. Read **Isaiah 55:6-9**.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He gave his life at Calvary so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**). Never forget to acknowledge God in all our ways, and give thanks in everything. (**Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18**).

Romans 1:22

Those who do not acknowledge God nor thank God are filled with an evil heart of unbelief. They turn away from the living God to their opinions, philosophies, psychology, or religious systems. The more they dwell on false ideas of science, religion, and philosophy the more wise they believe they are. They think they are growing in knowledge but are really becoming more foolish. They become fools while thinking they are smart. They are fools because they esteem what their own minds create over the established reality of who God is and the world God created around them. This is not the only place where the Bible calls unbelievers "fools". Read **Psalms 14:1**.

There were times when I debated unbelievers. I tried to reason with them. I would not say it is completely useless but remember the instruction in proverbs to stay away from foolish people. Read **Proverbs 14:7**. Also, the Lord Jesus exhorted us not to cast our pearls before swine. (**Matthew 7:6**).

It takes wisdom from the Holy Spirit to know when you are dealing with a mocker. They draw you in with questions which on the surface seem legitimate. However, they do exactly what the religious leaders did to Jesus. They use questions to trap a man in a snare.

Remember, someone who does not believe in God believes in lies. This person does not have a grasp on the meaning of language because they use words to lie. You cannot reason with someone like this. Everything you say is turned upside down. They change the meaning of words to conform to their self-centered world view.

After years of evangelism I came to the realization that debating is mostly fruitless. At least I've never had much success with this approach. The servant of the Lord is not called to strive with men about words. Instead, we are called to proclaim the truth. Why allow the unbeliever to set the framework of the "conversation" using lies such as evolution, science, false world history? Instead, it is our job to proclaim the gospel. Our job is not to argue. Our job is to preach and teach.

Follow the Holy Spirit in this work. Sometimes you may find an honest seeker who sincerely asks questions which he heard mockers ask. However, in his mind he is seeking. In this case it is fine to use apologetics to help him believe because he wants to believe. He needs help believing and overcoming doubts.

We are not called to argue with mockers. The servant of the Lord must not strive. (**2 Timothy 2:24**). From what I've seen it is Christians who esteem intelligence highly who are attracted to religious debates using science, logic, or what they call apologetics. I think Christians should humble their heart and use simple words to share with others the gospel message. Lace your conversation with verses straight out of the Bible. The word of God has power to convict the conscience. Logic can only go so far but the real work is bearing down on the conscience with the word of God.

I've found when I get angry at someone I am sharing the gospel with it is usually because the person is a mocker. Go from the presence of the foolish man. Don't cast your pearls before swine. The evil spirits working through them enjoy mocking you. You cannot reason with someone who is demon possessed. There are a lot more people demon possessed than what we realize (**Ephesians 2:2**).

May the Lord give us wisdom as we endeavor to win souls for Christ and avoid mockers.

Romans 1:23

What is the root cause of religions which bow down to idols, totem poles, statues, and icons? They knew God but they did not acknowledge him as God and were not thankful. As a result their worship descended to the lowest denominator.

Why would man want to worship birds, beasts, and creeping things? For the same reason society in America exalts sodomy. They glory in their shame. They exalt the lowest things so they can feel benevolent and superior. They feel moral by elevating the acceptance of sodomy to a virtue. They have

changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image like corruptible man. Man becomes a worshiper of himself.

Instead of looking to God they look inward to their own heart. The result is bizarre religions, philosophies, systems, programs, ordinances, confessions. Have you ever been in a group who sat around and confessed they were an addict and an alcoholic? Then you have seen up close what this verse talks about. They exchange the glory of God into something which is corrupt. They glory in their shame and define their life by their sin. This is false religion.

What do people do in church? They gather and agree upon a confession. In church that confession is "Jesus is Lord", but in these so-called secular self-help meetings the confession is always about self. They call their confession being honest with themselves and with others but they are liars. The entire system they join is a lie and deception. It is just another of Satan's systems put in place to separate people from the living God in Jesus Christ.

Today instead of bowing down to idols or animals men bow to themselves. He glorifies self and talks about how much he loves himself. They are lovers of self, boasters, proud, and blasphemers. Read **2 Timothy 3:1-5**. These verses describe American culture today, especially the society which sprang out of technology. Everyone is glued to technology and rapidly conforms to the pattern of the world system. Propaganda moves at breakneck speed and controls the minds of masses. It moves people around like puppets on a string.

Christians should pray, get into the word of God, and ask for revelation from God to see through the deceptions around us. Remember the instructions in **Romans 12:2** and **Ephesians 4:23**.

Romans 1:24

God executes judgment, not by lightning or thunder or earthquakes, but simply by removing his common grace from people who hate him. The sinner does not realize his life is in God's hand. The only thing which enables men to retain their humanity is the grace of God. When men do not acknowledge God and do not thank God but instead bow down to the creation of their own hands and minds then God removes his common grace. Men can have what they want.

Man looks inward but what he finds within is darkness. It is a bottomless abyss of darkness inside of men's hearts. Without God's grace men are consumed by darkness. This darkness fills the soul, the mind, the will, and the emotions. When men no longer conform to God then they are conformed to the image of darkness. This darkness inside of men totally corrupts the mind and leads him to live like an animal.

Part of acting like an animal is sexual degradation. Men glory in shame and define themselves through sin and rebellion against the Creator. When man reaches this point he is actively conforming himself to the devil.

It is Satan's plan to remove any resemblance of the image of God in man. God created man in his own image. When men dishonor their bodies between themselves they destroy the image of God they were created with. They completely separate themselves from the life of God and embrace death itself.

When men are ruled by lust society crumbles. Dictators rise to control the population because men can no longer be trusted to control themselves. The less men control themselves within the more they must be controlled from without.

It is a terrifying judgment when God turns his back on men. The only hope men have of maintaining their humanity is the grace of God. Without this grace men become devils. There is hardly a more terrifying phrase than this: "*God also gave them up*".

Romans 1:25

The enemy is a counterfeiter. He takes the truth and turns it into a lie.

This is what happened when Eve believed the Serpent instead of God. When Eve believed the Serpent she called God a liar. A man cannot hold the truth and the lie at the same time. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden by default men change the truth of God into a lie.

It requires revelation from the Holy Spirit for a man to grasp truth. I pray often for the Lord to give me a love of the truth, that I may walk in the truth, live in the truth, and always speak the truth in love to others. I do not want anything to do with lies, exaggerations, and deceit.

When men change God's truth into a lie they immediately worship the creation more than the Creator. What does this mean? It means man puts himself before God. He worships himself. He loves self more than he loves God. This is one of the signs of the last days that men will be lovers of their own selves. Read **2 Timothy 3:1-5**.

Men are religious while worshiping self and putting self first. This is the core of modern culture and thinking. Men consider themselves superior and evolved beyond Christianity. They believe in their own knowledge and science. They only believe in self now. This is exactly what the Antichrist beast represents. He represents self over God. He does not recognize any god. He boasts that he is God. He comes in his own name and the world will receive him as their own. Because he is.

It grieves me when I'm around people who love themselves, who exalt themselves, and boast of what they have done, do, or will do. It grieves me because I know what spirit works through them. It is not hard to discern the spirit of the devil working through people. Read **Ephesians 2:2**.

May the Lord open the eyes of the unbeliever that he may see how temporary this life is and understand the consequences of his words, actions, and attitudes. Call upon the Lord while he is near. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Today is the day of salvation.

Romans 1:26-32

Sexual perversion is the result when people have a reprobate mind. Those who flaunt their deviant sexuality are turned over to a reprobate mind. What exactly is a reprobate mind?

"Reprobate" means that something or someone is worthless or rejected. If something cannot be used or has no purpose it is reprobate. Reprobate means people become corrupt to the point where their lives are worthless. They no longer bring any glory to God.

The purpose of man is to serve God and worship God and to enjoy God. However, when people define their life by sin and perversion they no longer glorify God. The mind of this person is reprobate. It no longer has any worth. It is rejected.

We know from the Bible that men can become so corrupt they no longer hear God's voice. Their conscience is seared. Their minds are not capable of receiving truth. This is a mind which is reprobate. It is no longer able to grasp truth anymore. These people have lost their humanity.

How can we resist this downward pull of depravity? We agree with God that he is right and we are wrong. I say to God, "You are right, Lord. I am wrong." I trust completely in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. I call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of my soul. When we believe on the Lord Jesus we are born again by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach, guide, and lead us into the truth of God's word. He works in us to sanctify us and prepare us for eternity.

Salvation includes justification through the finished work of Christ, sanctification by faith in Christ alone, and finally we will be glorified when we are resurrected. We will receive a resurrected body and will live forever with the Lord.

Each day we live give thanks to the Lord. Acknowledge the Lord in all our ways. This will keep us living with the right attitude and keep us far away from the downward pull of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Romans Chapter 2

Romans 2:1

The idea Paul developed was that all men are under sin. We are born sinners. From the time we are born human nature is controlled by the power of sin. Every man when he reaches an age when he knows what is right and wrong becomes accountable to God for his actions.

Paul's point was that those who knew God's law and pointed out the sins in other people also condemned themselves. No man kept the law of God except one man, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus completely obeyed and fulfilled the entire law of God.

This moral law was written upon man's conscience. Men have a built in knowledge of good and evil. This inner knowledge is what enables men to look around at the actions of others and determine if what others do is right or wrong. Everyone does this. Not just hypocrites in church. Everyone judges everyone. This is an automatic reaction everyone has. However, when we do this we also condemn ourselves.

The inner knowledge that others do wrong is also the same knowledge which condemns us. God's law absolutely condemns every single person on the planet. We have all broken God's law and committed sin.

We do not have an excuse. We cannot say to God that we did not know when we did something wrong. We knew it when we chose to do what was wrong. We knew it in our heart and in our mind. Our

conscience told on us. This is the reason so many people try so hard to stifle their conscience through constant intellectual stimulation. Experiences, entertainment, and constantly being on the go is how we run away from the pain we feel in our conscience.

However, there is another way we deal with our conscience. Instead of running away we can be brave and humble our heart. We can have the courage to confess to God that we know we are wrong, that we have done wrong, that we have lived the wrong way. When we agree with God like this then we can put our faith in Jesus Christ to cleanse us from every sin and from all filthiness of the flesh and mind. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness. (**1 John 1:9**).

We will not be able to stand before God on judgment day with the excuse that we did not know any better. If we do that I can only imagine how God would replay back for us every time we pointed out the faults, weaknesses, mistakes, and sins of other people. This is ample evidence that we know better. We do not have excuses before God.

It is much better to humble ourselves now under the mighty hand of God. God gives grace to the humble man. He will forgive us, save us, and deliver us. Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Romans 2:2

God's judgment is according to truth. This means the Lord sees all the facts in every case and judges without partiality. God cannot be moved by bribes or emotional pleas. The only plea which God hears is the cry of a man who calls upon Jesus Christ to forgive him and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

The judgment of men stands in contrast to the judgment of God. Men often judge others based on their emotions, opinions, or particular bias. Men judge other men according to appearance and are moved by what they see on the surface. Man's judgments are not ever completely based on truth. However, God's judgment is according to truth. Read **1 Corinthians 4:3-5**.

We need to recognize fruit in the lives of people in order to protect ourselves from false prophets and teachers. However, there is a sense in that we are not supposed to judge other brothers, because judgment is usually superficial. We can't know all the facts in a brother's life. It is important we do not pull up the wheat along with the tares. Instead, let us trust in God to judge his people. Determine not to put a stumbling block in the way of anyone else. Live a life of love, as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us.

If we can discern spirits and see the intentions of others then let us employ these gifts by edifying, exhorting, and comforting. This means we get involved and come alongside others for their good and not for tearing them down. We should serve others in love, even if we know someone was wrong. A spiritual brother restores others and does not immediately cast people out of fellowship. There is a time when an unrepentant brother is put out of fellowship but that is only for the purpose of helping him to repent. What happens when he repents?

The Lord judges according to truth. He does not look at us in a superficial manner. He knows our sins. Though he knows we are sinners he died for us on Calvary. God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ Jesus died for us.

Instead of judging others let us love others. This does not mean we have no discernment. We need to love people within the context of truth. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Religious people and moralists are often guilty of judging people over superficial things while completely ignoring the fact that they do the same thing.

Only the living God and the power of the Holy Spirit can help us to live a life of love and deliver us from judging others.

Paul's point was that not only were the flaunted sins of pagans worthy of God's wrath but also the religious attitude of superiority was worthy of God's judgment. Everyone was fallen into sin. Read **Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Isaiah 64:6**.

Instead of defending self and insisting on our own righteousness let us instead humble ourselves and agree with God that we are wrong. We are wrong and God is righteous. Let us turn from our self and put our complete trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:3

The message Paul taught was that since men were able to point out what was wrong in others then they were culpable of their own moral standard. When men express knowledge of standards which they hold others to they show by this their knowledge of their own sinfulness. Not only were those who flaunted their sins accountable to God but also the moral man who pointed out the error of others. Every person is accountable to God.

When we see clearly the sin in other people we acknowledge men are accountable. Each of us is accountable to God. This means there will be a specific time when we will face a review of our lives. Everyone knows this but men suppress the truth of God's judgment. They attempt to push this out of their minds by using their vain imagination and hardening their heart.

No one will escape God's judgment. The Bible says the eyes of the Lord are everywhere keeping watch on the evil and the good man. Read **Proverbs 5:21 and Proverbs 15:3**.

God has every right to judge mankind because He made us. When I make something it belongs to me. When God makes something or someone it belongs to him. Not only does God own us because he made us but he also redeemed mankind through the blood which Jesus Christ shed upon the cross of Calvary. He owns us twice over. Yes, God has every right to judge men, and every man will stand before God's judgment.

Every man who humbles himself and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will escape God's judgment of condemnation and death. Jesus took upon himself our condemnation and our death sentence. Through faith in the Lord Jesus we can escape from God's wrath and the sentence of eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This judgment seat of Christ is not for condemnation but for giving the Christian an inheritance and reward in the kingdom of God.

For more information on judgment, the Lake of Fire, the judgment seat of Christ, rewards, and inheritance read the following Bible verses: **Revelation 20:11-15, Matthew 12:36, Matthew 12:41, Romans 14:10, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Timothy 4:8, Revelation 3:11**

Deny self. Take up your cross. Put your entire faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

Romans 2:4

Because God is good he made a way for men to escape from the punishment of sin. Because God is good he offered a door of escape from the consequences of sin. He offered forgiveness for every sin. God is good and is willing to forgive. It is not God's will for any man to perish in his sins. (**2 Peter 3:9**). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (**Ezekiel 33:11**).

God forgives because of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ who died on a cross. Jesus was buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead.

He is the Son of God (**Romans 1:4**) and by faith in Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, the world, and victory over the devil. (**Romans 6; 1 John 5:4-5; 1 John 3:8**). We no longer live according to the old man, the flesh, or the carnal nature. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away and all things have become new. (**2 Corinthian 5:17**).

God's goodness leads men to repentance. It is God's goodness when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. (**John 16:8**). When the Holy Spirit speaks to our conscience with painful emotions due to our selfish lifestyle we experience God's goodness.

It is God's goodness when we are made aware of our disobedience and are able to humble ourselves and admit we are wrong. This is the goodness of God if we are able to do this. Many people have lost this ability and now have a reprobate (worthless, rejected) mind. (**Romans 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16**).

If we belong to the Lord he will not let us continue in sin. The pleasure which comes from sin lasts a short time and leaves one empty on the inside. (**Hebrews 11:25**).

Man tries to satisfy the spiritual hunger inside by filling his life with idolatry, covetousness, and lusts. It is shallow and empty. It is like someone dying from starvation eating popcorn and cotton candy every day. It is like someone dying of thirst and can only drink alcohol. It only worsens the problem and does not satisfy. Sin only gives an illusion of satisfying the inward hunger and thirst.

The Lord Jesus demonstrated the goodness of God when he led the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well to a saving knowledge of himself. (**John 4**). He revealed himself to her and promised her that anyone who believed in him would never thirst again. The water this world offers never satisfies our thirst, but the living water which Jesus gives satisfies our need now and for eternity. He is the well of living water. He is the living bread. He is our provision and our provider.

We see the goodness of God in the life of Jesus. The Lord Jesus was moved by compassion and served multitudes of people by driving out demons, healing sickness, feeding people, and preaching to them the good news of the kingdom.

Today God shows us his goodness through millions of printed Bibles, preachers, churches, and people around the world who share God's word, the gospel, and God's love in practical helping ministries.

Why would anyone despise the goodness of God? This is the question Paul asked and the question the Holy Spirit is asking.

Why do people despise the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ? This is a gospel which is free for the taking. No money is required to obtain eternal life. (**Isaiah 55:1-2**). All one has to do is believe the gospel that Jesus Christ died for us, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

The reason I think people despise the goodness of God is because it is too simple and too easy. Men want to exalt their own name. They want to work and build something they can point at, beat on their chest, and say, "Look at me!" But God commands us not to look at ourselves, but instead to look to him. Read **Isaiah 45:22**. It is that simple.

Romans 2:5

When people turn their back on the goodness of God they are changed. People change when they hear the gospel and turn away from it. How are they changed? When someone experiences God's goodness and turns their back on Him their heart is hardened. Rejecting God's grace turns men's heart hard. Rejecting the Lord hardens a man's heart. If you think about it this makes complete sense.

If someone offered kindness to me and I rejected it then my heart would be hardened. Every time men hear the gospel and turn away from it their heart gets harder. Unbelief takes over a man's character and personality. They are filled with the darkness of unbelief and their heart turns to stone inside of them.

The result of rejecting God's goodness is that men save up wrath against themselves. When men reject God's goodness they store up God's wrath against themselves. This is something which increases over time. It is like putting money in the bank and never making a withdrawal. The longer you put money in the bank and don't spend it the more you store it up. Men store up God's wrath against themselves.

Men assume since they are not immediately punished for their hard heart and willful sin that God does not see what they do. They assume they get away with their sin and unbelief. However, the Bible makes it clear God is long suffering. He gives men opportunity to repent and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A day will arrive when God expresses his wrath. His wrath will be revealed and the righteous judgment of God will fall upon Satan and upon men who turned their back on God's goodness.

God expresses his goodness through his Son Jesus Christ. When men reject Jesus and pursue other religions or philosophies they turn their back on the goodness of God. When men reject the gospel of Jesus Christ they store up wrath against themselves.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through the Son Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6**). There is no other name given by whom men are saved. (**Acts 4:12**). Let us seek the Lord

while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. (**Isaiah 55:6**). Today is the day of salvation. (**2 Corinthians 6:2**).

Romans 2:6

I think Christians can become confused when the Bible describes God judging men according to their works or deeds. The foundation we stand on is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. Our justification by faith makes us completely secure in salvation in regard to the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

There is more to the believer's life than forgiveness of sins. The Lord also has rewards and inheritance for believers in his kingdom. This is a topic we need to focus on more often. The Bible teaches us that unbelievers and believers face a judgment of works. This does not mean Christians are justified by works. However, Christians are to walk in good works which God prepared for them. Read **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

There are at least two judgments for men. I know of a third, also, but I won't get into the other judgment right now. There is the great white throne judgment for unbelievers. At that judgment unbelievers are condemned because their works, no matter how good or sincere, could not earn them salvation or justification before a holy God. (**Revelation 20:11-15**).

Another judgment is for believers. This is known as the judgment seat of Christ. Read **2 Corinthians 5:10**. The judgment seat of Christ is for the purpose of reviewing the life of each individual believer. This judgment is not for deciding whether or not a person is saved or unsaved or whether a person will go to heaven or hell. This judgment is about rewards or a loss of rewards for the Christian. Read **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**.

As Christians we are secure in Christ. However, being secure should not make us lazy or careless. Grace does not lead men to sin or live carelessly. God's grace teaches us to live holy lives. (**Titus 2:11-13**). Grace teaches us to live in view of the eternal kingdom of God and to prepare ourselves.

Let us live in expectancy of the return of the Lord Jesus and be ready always to go out to meet him when he returns.

Romans 2:7-11

Here we see that whether or not a man does what is bad or good the Lord deals with him according to his actions. A man who does what is good is rewarded. A man who does what is evil is punished. It does not matter if the man is a Jew or a Gentile. God does not take into consideration what cultural, social, or language background a man comes from. Each man is addressed by God according to his individual actions.

The Lord knows perfectly how every man lives. He knows the man who professes God with his mouth but inwardly is selfish and hypocritical. He also knows the man who is not pretentious and tries to do good according to his own conscience. The Lord meets every one of these men exactly where they are.

The point Paul was driving at here was that God does not show favoritism to one group of people over another but instead addresses each man as an individual and in accordance to how that individual man lives. What matters to God is not what family a man comes from but how does the man live.

A life of right behavior flows from simple faith in God. A life of evil flows from a man who worships self. A man who puts himself or things before God is an idolater, and out of his life flows the river of idolatry. **Galatians 5:19-21** lists the fruits of a self-centered life. Paul causes this lifestyle "*walking in the flesh*".

A man who walks in the Spirit has much different fruit. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**.

The Lord does not show favoritism. Men almost always show favoritism toward certain kind of people. They judge men by their speech or their appearance. However, God deals with a man according to what is in the heart and by the actions the man's heart produces.

We should always strive to stay away from attitudes of favoritism, racism, prejudice, and nepotism. All these attitudes go together and when we practice these attitudes in word or action it causes us to go further away from the Lord Jesus.

There is no place in the Christian life for favoritism, respect of person, partiality, racism, prejudice or nepotism. Let us recognize these things, humble ourselves, and repent of these attitudes. Do not let these things become a part of who you are.

Romans 2:12-16

The Bible teaches that whether or not a man has a Bible he is still accountable to God. How is man accountable to God if he never read the Bible or heard the gospel? He is accountable because God writes the law upon every man's conscience. God put the law into the heart of every man. The conscience accuses or excuses us.

Knowing the law of God in the Bible does not make a man more spiritual than the man who does not know the Bible. Knowing the Bible does not make us any different from a man who does not know the Bible. God does not judge according to what we know but judges every man according to his actions.

A man who does not have a Bible is judged according to what he knows in his conscience. However, a man who does have the Bible is judged according to what he knows from the Bible and his conscience.

Paul's argument was that it does not matter if a man was religious or not. The outward display of religion, church, or carrying a Bible will not matter in the day of judgment.

Those who die without knowing the Bible perish. Those who have a Bible but live in disobedience also perish. There is no difference. Having knowledge of God's law does not make a man better than one who does not have a Bible. All men perish no matter where they come from, what they think they know, or how religious they are.

We should pay attention to "*in the day when God shall judge*". There is a day appointed in the which God will judge men by Jesus Christ. Read **Acts 17:30-31**.

The standard of perfection is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. No one born matches the perfection of the Son of God. Since we are unable to match his perfection we automatically receive the sentence of condemnation.

This is why it is so important to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is important to understand Jesus paid the price on the cross. Jesus died so we would not have to die and be condemned. Eternal condemnation is eternal punishment in a lake of fire. We cannot conceive of an eternity separated from the God who created us. The horror of this is unimaginable.

God makes salvation simple. All he wants is for us to believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ redeems us from our sins through his death, burial, and resurrection. God placed us into Christ Jesus and rescued us. All we need to do is respond to God with faith and trust in his word.

Let us humble ourselves and confess that we are wrong and that God is right. Let us agree with God. The only way we can be saved is through his Son Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:17-29

This scripture speaks to the Jew, but also speaks to the religious church member today. Paul asked the religious Jew to examine himself and how he lived. The religious Jew considered himself to be a teacher to others on how to please God by obeying God's law. However, Paul asked the religious Jew if he really kept God's law. When we teach others not to steal do we rob? When we teach others not to commit adultery, do we lust with our eyes? When we tell others to respect the Bible, the church, and God do we turn around and dishonor God by the way we live? Are we selfish? Do we live for ourselves first or for God? Truly?

Paul concluded that the outward religious observance was vain. The Jews did not understand the true spiritual intent of God's law. God's law was not given so we could make ourselves righteous by striving to obey it. The purpose of God's law was to prove how sinful we really are.

God's law is meant to humble us, but instead men take God's law and attempt to assert their own self-righteousness before men. Paul said when we do this it is because we love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Paul was not the only one who noticed this. The writers in the gospel accounts also pointed out that the Pharisees loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Read **John 12:42-43**.

Men want to make their name great. They want to exalt their position so they can experience power over other people. Why would someone want to exalt themselves over others? Because Satan has deceived mankind into believing that the way to provide for one's own self, the way to protect one's own self, is to make a name for one's self. This is the deception of the world system which Satan created.

When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God they are deceived. They believe the lie of making a name for themselves. They believe the lie of pride, position, and prestige. They believe these lies and reject the truth of God's word.

The only man who received praise from God was the one who denied himself, took up his cross, and followed the way of Jesus Christ. It is by dying to self that we find true life. It is by denying self that we find the life of Christ.

It is by uniting together with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection that we experience true life and praise from God.

Romans Chapter 3

Romans 3:1-2

The Jewish advantage was the Bible. God gave his word to Israel, and they carried it with them. Of course, this was why they were persecuted and killed by the world. The devil and the world system hates, persecutes, and kills anyone who carries God's word.

How was it an advantage then to have God's word? It was an advantage because it meant God had a special interest in you. God chose you. This may mean suffering for now but ultimately it meant God had a special plan for you. (**Psalm 30:5**).

The Lord does have a special plan for Israel. His promise to Israel will be fulfilled and they will receive a kingdom. The prophets pointed to the day the Lord would establish the kingdom of Israel. All other nations on earth will serve the King and Israel. Israel is the glory of God and God has a plan for the nation of Israel.

The advantage of the Jew was that he received God's promise and God's word. The Lord will fulfill his word to Israel and his promise is always yes and amen.

As a Christian we should never think the church replaced Israel in God's plan. Israel, the church, and also the kingdom coming to earth are all a reflection of who God is. God is three in one. In the same way God's people are three in one. God's people are Israel, the church, and those who God will take out of the nations during the millennium. God's people are three in one. We are one people of God, distinct in our special way, yet one people serving the one true God. There is one Messiah for all of God's people, and God's Messiah is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul never gave up on the Jews. He prayed for Israel to be saved. I believe he wrote the book of Hebrews for Jewish Christians. He expressed his heart for Israel in **Romans 9:1-5**.

The greatest advantage of the Jew was that Jesus is a Jew. Even though the Jews in Jesus' day did not receive him in a national sense there were individual Jews who knew the Messiah. Israel will in the future receive him as the Messiah as one nation. All Israel will be saved. (**Romans 11:26**).

The teaching that God no longer has a plan for Israel or that the church replaced Israel stems from bad Bible interpretation. It results in an incorrect view of end times events. Let us pray the Lord will give us wisdom in understanding the Bible so we can see God's plan for the ages.

Romans 3:3-4

Does it matter if people do not believe in God? Some think God exists for man because men choose to believe in God. This is a trend of thinking in society. To the unbeliever everything is relative to the individual. This is really mental illness. It makes the individual into a "god". This kind of worldview makes the individual into a "god". This is the worldview promoted by Satan. Sadly, it completely controls the thinking of the common man on the street today.

What if some do not believe? Shall the unbelief of men make the faith of God without effect? God exists whether or not men believe in him. God exists independent of man's belief or faith. God is! God created the world and he created man. God does not depend upon man's belief. Man depends upon God's mercy and grace.

Paul said that despite the unbelief in Israel God would still fulfill his promise to Israel. God will follow through with what he said even if men do not believe. The Lord does not depend on man to accomplish his goal and purpose.

If we believe in him we become active participants in God's plan. By having faith in the Lord Jesus we benefit from God's promises and God's word. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we escape from the wrath of God. This wrath is upon the sons of disobedience.

Christians who follow bad theology may think they replace Israel. It is true there is a pause in God's plan for national Israel. However, after the rapture of the church, the plan for Israel will resume once again. When the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled then God's plan for Israel will resume. Current events point to God picking up where he left off with Israel two thousand years ago. The day of the church will come to an end and the day of the kingdom will arrive.

Unbelievers think they create reality with positive thoughts but Christians know that only the Lord God Almighty is God. There is no other God but the Lord. Read **Isaiah 45:5-6, 22; Isaiah 46:9**.

Men are deceived to think they are the master of their life. They think they are a "god". However, this is the lie of the serpent. This is the lie the devil told Eve in the garden and it is the same lie he sells to men today. (**Genesis 3:5**). This is the lie people are deluded with in the last days. This is the lie the Antichrist embodies when he reveals himself.

Men do not create reality. This is the lie of sorcery and witchcraft, and it is a lie which has embedded itself in the church through false gospels such as hyper-faith and prosperity theology.

God is true and men are liars. We need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and confess that we are wrong. We need to acknowledge that God is righteous, holy, and pure. The Lord Jesus is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

Romans 3:9-18

Man in his natural state has no fear of God. He might fear his earthly parents or authorities but he does not fear God. There is no fear of God in the heart of the unbelieving man. As a result, men constantly leave destruction and misery behind them. Where they tread, misery and destruction will follow. This

may not be the intention in the heart of man but it will surely follow him. It is as sure as the sun rises and sets.

Men are swift to shed blood. According to Jesus one does not have to actually kill a man physically to have murder in one's heart toward another. All it takes is selfish anger and hatred to be guilty of murder. From this viewpoint even slandering people is the same as killing them.

The unbeliever has a mouth filled with bitterness and cursing. I noticed one of the first changes in my life after I was filled with the Holy Spirit was that I immediately stopped cursing. I no longer used cuss words in my every day speech. It was no longer part of my everyday vocabulary.

Notice how the Holy Spirit tied in words we speak with the poison of snakes. Spiritually and literally the effect of bitter and cursing words has this effect. It poisons those who hear it. It spreads death and lies everywhere. When men do not believe in God or fear God their tongues are used for spreading death and lies. They are one with the serpent in principle and goal. They live for self just like the devil.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that there is no man who is righteous or who does what is good. No man in his natural state seeks after God or wants to know God.

It is a miracle when men seek after the living God. This is God's mercy when men seek the Lord and call upon his name. It is a miracle when a man calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Everyone is under the condemnation of sin. Men are worshipers of self and so walk in agreement with the devil. This is the natural state of every man in this world.

The only answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. By putting our faith in the Lord Jesus and staking our life upon his finished, completed work we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil. We receive forgiveness of sin and are welcomed into the kingdom of God.

Let us never forget how deceitful the heart of the natural man is. There is no fear of God in him. If he does not fear God then he is capable of committing any evil or sin given a certain circumstance. Let us never believe that men are good. They are not. Men are evil and sinful. I'll never forget what the message of a street preacher I heard in Philadelphia one time. She said, "Do you want to see the devil? Then look into the mirror." She had it right.

May the Lord help us to see our true condition and cause us to humble our hearts and repent. Let us turn to God in repentance and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:19-20

God gave us the ten commandments because he knew we could not keep them. What? According to what the Holy Spirit taught us the purpose of the law was to demonstrate how sinful we are.

The law demonstrates how sinful men are. It is a ruler placed beside a crooked piece of timber. Men by nature are crooked and broken. The perfection of God's law brings this out in contrast. No wonder sinners hate to read the Bible. It does nothing but rebuke and correct them.

Whatever the law says it says to those who are under the law. The law of God speaks to the Jewish man and tells him he is a sinner. It speaks to the Gentile and tells him he is a sinner. God provides the law so that the entire world will know it is guilty before God.

We need to close our mouth and stop defending ourselves. We are guilty. We are sinners. We need to be quiet. We have no defense against a holy God.

What does someone look like who holds onto the rags of their own righteousness? They will defend themselves even when no one accuses them. They come up with defenses, stories, and excuses for their actions and words. They do not understand that we are defenseless in the face of God's law. God's law is perfect. There is no flaw in it. We are all guilty and corrupt before a holy God.

We should meditate upon this until it seeps into our heart. No one is justified by the deeds of the law. Obeying the ten commandments does not justify anyone before God. If a man were to start today and obey God's law perfectly he could not be justified because in the past he already broke God's law. Every person has shattered God's law into a million pieces. There is no point trying to talk ourselves out of our guilt. We are guilty, guilty, guilty. The law brings us to the knowledge of our guilt before God. By the law is the knowledge of sin.

We are not saved, justified, or sanctified by striving to obey the law of God. It does not promote spiritual growth or life. It does not make us more sanctified. Those who think the observance of rules and laws makes them more spiritual or pleasing to God are deceived. It will only produce self-righteousness, pride, and the attitude of religion which Jesus severely condemned in the Pharisees.

Our only hope is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our only hope is in the Savior Jesus Christ who died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Our only hope is trusting in the completed and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father placed us into Christ and united us together with him in death, burial and resurrection. This is the way to freedom from sin, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

Romans 3:21-26

The way God saves men demonstrates God's righteousness. The method God uses to save us from our sins demonstrates the glory and honor of God. We want this to be the case. We always want God to be glorified and we want his righteousness to be exalted.

The righteousness of God is revealed by Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is God's righteousness and all of the law and the prophets point to him. The law and the prophets testify and witness to their own fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. God imputes the righteousness of Christ to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way God can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.

It would be impossible for God to be holy and forgive men of their sins if not for Christ Jesus. What Jesus did made it possible for God to punish sin and hate sin and yet forgive sinners. There is no other way this would be possible. It is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that God demonstrated his justice and that he justifies freely those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

It does not matter what cultural, racial, ethnic, or language background a man comes from. Anyone, Jew or Gentile, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and forgiven. All of our sins are forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone has sinned and there is only one way our sins can be forgiven. Faith in Jesus Christ allows God to impute his own righteousness to us. He takes upon himself our sins and gives to us his righteousness. (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

There is nothing we can do in this except believe God's word. All God wants us to do is believe him and trust him. (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Once again let us underline the truth that we are not under law. It is not through striving to obey God's law that we are saved. If we believed in the Lord Jesus then we cannot think now it is our job to strive to obey God's law. All our striving is in vain. It does not make us more sanctified to follow God's law, and it does not commend us to God in any way. Only one thing is pleasing to God. This one thing is faith in his son Jesus Christ. Read **John 6:28-29**.

Romans 3:27-31

After proving that all men are under sin Paul introduced us to the righteousness of God in his Son Jesus Christ. God chose to save us, not based on what we do, but based on what his Son Jesus Christ did for us. Our part is to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not be moved away from the gospel to any other religion, system, philosophy, or psychology. We are called to abide in the work which Christ did for us. The conclusion Paul presented was that men are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law. Therefore we are not saved by striving to obey God's law. We are justified by faith in Christ Jesus.

God is not only the God of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. It is through the Jews we received the word of God and it is through the Jews we received our Savior Jesus Christ. Salvation came to us through the Jewish people as the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

We do not make the law of God void through faith. Jesus said that every jot and tittle of the law would be fulfilled. Jesus himself fulfilled God's law for us. What we could not do because of the weakness of our flesh God did for us through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we are placed into God's Son by faith. God the Father himself placed us into his Son who became our "*wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*". (**1 Corinthians 1:30**).

Paul asked this question about boasting. We should not boast in ourselves or in what we might accomplish with our intellect or willpower or strength. Instead, we should boast in what the Lord Jesus Christ did. Boasting in ourselves shows the pride of self worship. When we boast in the Lord we demonstrate our knowledge of our true condition and who the Lord truly is. Read **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**. Also, read **Jeremiah 9:24**.

Romans Chapter 4

Romans 4:1

Paul proved from the Bible and logic that all men are under sin. Paul moved toward his next point which was justification by faith and not by the works of the law.

To make his case Paul used the example of Abraham. He called Abraham "our father" even though this letter to the Romans was written to a Gentile audience. Abraham was not just the father of Israel, but also a father of many nations. Paul used the example of Abraham's life to prove his case that justification was by faith and not through the works of the law.

To be justified means we are declared not guilty of whatever accusation is against us. God is just and is also the justifier of those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ.

The religious people Paul worked with, however, wanted to continue following their own interpretation of the Old Testament. Paul's teaching about God's grace and our faith in God's Son created enemies who accused him of being an enemy of Israel. Paul was not an enemy of the Jewish people or Israel. He simply pointed everyone to the fulfillment of God's law in Jesus Christ.

Abraham was an example of faith before the law of God was given. Before God gave Israel the law he declared Abraham a righteous man because of Abraham's faith in God's promise. Abraham heard God's word and believed what God said to him. He trusted in the Lord. By this God declared Abraham righteous.

In the same way we are declared righteous when we believe in God's Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's word who became a man and lived among us. Men literally touched him, heard him, saw him, and walked with him. They came to understand he is God in the flesh. He is God with us, Immanuel.

Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people, was also the spiritual father of all those who receive the righteousness of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:2-3

If Abraham were justified by works he might have something to boast about, but he could not boast before God. Any man no matter how perfect and righteous will never live up to the standard of God himself. No one can be as perfect, holy, and righteous as God. Since we cannot attain to the righteousness of God then justification can never be by good works.

What does scripture say? Scripture says Abraham believed God and God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. Does this mean God made Abraham into a perfect man? If you read the life story of Abraham in the book of Genesis you do not see a perfect man. You see a man who made a lot of mistakes and did not live a perfect life. However, because he believed in God his faith was counted as righteousness.

Another way of understanding "*counted unto him*" is to think in terms of financial accounting. It is the same as if we were to say God put money in the bank for Abraham. God counted Abraham as righteous despite his mistakes or sins. He did this because Abraham believed God's word.

This works exactly the same for us today as it did for the believing remnant within the nation of Israel. The Lord had a believing people in Israel, in the church, and will have a people during the millennium in the nations who believe in him. All three are the one people of God. They are of the same faith as Abraham. They believe in God's Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are justified by faith in what the Lord Jesus did for us in his finished work. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and calls upon his name is justified. God imputes his righteousness to every man who believes in his Son Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:4-5

It is easier for us to understand what Paul taught if put into terms anyone can understand. This is what Paul did by using the analogy of employment. If a man works at a job then his wages are an obligation. However, God will never be obligated to man. This is why we can never approach God on the basis of works. To attempt to approach God on this basis is offensive to God. Instead, God wants to justify and save men on the basis of giving us a free gift. His free gift to us is His Son Jesus Christ.

For a man who does not work for justification but believes in the God who justifies the ungodly his faith is credited as righteousness. God wants us to know and believe He is good and He gives us the best. He gives us his Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our salvation, He is our justification, He is our sanctification, He is our wisdom. **1 Corinthians 1:30**, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"*

Jesus is everything we need for this life and the next life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can approach God except through God's free gift to us who is Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6**).

When we see we are sinners and under God's wrath then what we need to do to escape wrath is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Acts 16:30-31**.

God's free gift to us is eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ. Who would turn down such an offer? Only those who would rather work for their salvation. Those who work for their salvation do so in complete unbelief of God's revealed will in the Bible.

Romans 4:6-8

Paul quoted **Psalms 32:1-2**. Paul moved from using Abraham as an example to King David to confirm that justification from God is by faith alone apart from works.

How did David know about this? Did David understand what he wrote in the same way Paul interpreted it? I think he did because the Holy Spirit is the one who used both men to record the Bible.

Some people have strange ideas about how people in Israel were saved before Christ. I am alarmed at some of what I hear men teach on this. They say strange things about how Jews were saved during the time of the Old Testament. Some teach Jews today do not need to believe in Jesus to be saved! What a tragedy that a system of theology separates men from the truth in God's word.

I won't repeat their teaching anymore but let me underline this truth: all men were always saved by faith. It is by faith men were saved and not by works. This is not a new teaching God gave the apostle Paul. God always saved men on the basis of his grace and men's faith. Men never were saved by works. Never!

King David understood men were forgiven of their sins by faith apart from works.

From the beginning man was saved by faith in what God said to him. God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden and revealed to them that a Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the serpent. The serpent would crush his heel, but the Seed would crush the head of the serpent. From the beginning those who believed the gospel of the Messiah were saved by faith. Never were men saved or justified through religious ritual or works of the law.

Paul taught us the purpose God gave Israel the law, the ordinances, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the ark of the covenant. All these were a shadow of the reality of Jesus Christ. All this pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have no doubt that believers in Israel, the remnant within the nation, understood the gospel. They did not have the more complete revelation of Jesus we do, but nevertheless they knew enough to believe and be saved. God revealed himself to them and they knew Messiah would come. They were saved looking forward in the same way we are saved looking back to Christ. Moses prophesied of the Messiah and so did all the prophets point to the Messiah and the Kingdom of the Messiah.

How happy are those whose sins are forgiven because they believe in the God who justifies men! Jesus paid it all. Men are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ from beginning to end, through all time and history. David was our witness and he gave his testimony of this blessing.

Romans 4:9-12

Notice the blessing of being justified by faith was established for both Jew and the Gentile. A man who was a physical descendant of Abraham was justified like the man who was not. A Jew was saved by God's promise when he walked in the footsteps of the faith that father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Religious observance does not provide justification or salvation. When men put emphasis on circumcision, baptism, church ordinances, or any outward observance it is because they do not understand the good news. All men are justified freely by grace in the finished work of the Messiah. The Gentile person today is saved by God in the same manner as the ancient Israelite was saved by God. We are saved by faith in what God promised. He promised us his Son, the Messiah. Jesus Christ is the Messiah God promised to Israel and to the world. It is through the Jewish people the Messiah arrived.

Circumcision or baptism or communion are all things which men who are justified by faith do as a witness that they belong to God. It is a mark of the ownership of God upon the individual's life. However, many people get this backwards and think the physical seal of circumcision or getting put under water in baptism is what justifies them. If this is true then how could Jesus Christ have told the thief on the cross that he would see him that day in paradise?

Everyone is given the free gift of eternal life through faith in God's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the penalty for sins when he died on the cross. Now God can be just and justify the sinner who puts his faith in what Christ did. Our sins are forgiven because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are set free from religion so we can serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, but Christ is all in all. Read **Colossians 3:11**.

Don't be led astray by attempts to separate God's people into different categories. The true people of God were always justified by faith in the Messiah. These true people of the faith of Abraham are God's overcoming remnant.

Romans 4:13-15

The promises God made to Abraham were given before Moses received the ten commandments. Paul used this fact to demonstrate that justification and salvation are related to God's promise and our faith. Justification and salvation do not relate to the law of God because the law of God produces wrath.

When men make a law they also need someone to enforce the law or it is not a real law but only a suggestion. All of God's law which he gave to Moses are enforced by God himself.

Jesus Christ fulfilled all of God's law so we could escape the wrath of God enforcing the law. God enforced the punishment of his law when Jesus died on Calvary.

Now we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and escape the wrath of God. We are no longer subject to the law of God because we are in Christ Jesus.

God made promises to Abraham and his descendants concerning inheriting a promised land. The boundaries of this land are clear. God has not changed his mind about giving this land to the physical descendants of Abraham.

However, this land promise cannot be completely fulfilled without the Messiah. The Messiah is Israel's King who will reign over this kingdom. The promise of the land is tied directly with the promise of the Messiah.

Those who believed God's promise to Abraham concerning the land also believed God's promise of Messiah. By faith in the Messiah men were justified and saved no matter what time period in world history they lived in. In the past men looked forward to Messiah. Men today look back to what Jesus did on Calvary. In the future men will be justified and saved through faith in the finished work of the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's argument was that if righteousness came through the law then what was the point of having faith? If God justified us because our parents were Jews then what was the need for us to have a personal faith in the promise of the living God? This is the same deception children of Christian parents fall into today. Many church goers are deceived that they are right with God because their parents were Christians or because they were raised in a church. This is a religious deception.

Each person must come to personal faith in Jesus. This is the only way God relates to men. He deals with each person on an individual basis when it comes to justification and salvation.

God also deals with mankind on the level of nations. He gave national promises to Israel, and all of God's promises will be fulfilled. God never breaks his word and his promises which he gives to men.

Romans 4:16

In a strange twist we have the flip side problem of what Paul taught. In his day he tried to convince people that Gentiles were part of the Lord's plan and could be grafted into the Jewish tree. Today people have the attitude that Jews no longer have any part in God's present or future plans. However, what Paul said here applies both ways. The gospel is for the Jew and the Gentile alike. All men are sinners, and all men can be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, as well, God will carry on to completion his plan for national Israel in the kingdom age.

God's promise works with our faith and is completely a matter of grace and not of the law. This is so important to understand. Religious men continue trying to pull unwitting victims back under the curse of the law. The only hope for any man is God's grace expressed in his Son Jesus Christ. Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can a man receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from sin, self, the world, and the devil.

This phrase "*the faith of Abraham*" shows us that men were always saved in the same manner. Abraham was counted righteous by God in the same manner as men today are counted righteous with God. It is through faith in the promise of God. God's promise to Abraham involved the promised land and that he would be a father. However, we understand that the promise of a son to Abraham pointed us back to the original promise of God in the Garden of Eden about the Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the Serpent. Men through all of time and history who believed in God's promise received justification and forgiveness of their sins. The just always lived by faith and did not live by striving to obey law.

Even those to whom God gave the law of Moses were only justified by faith. They were not made righteous by going through rituals of animal sacrifice. If those actions were not inspired by a reverential faith and trust in God's promise then it meant nothing. Jumping through the hoops of a religious system does not make a man right with God.

All those who are of the faith of Abraham from beginning to end are God's people. They are the remnant of spiritual people within the nation of Israel who believed God's promise. They are the remnant of spiritual people with the outward structure of the church who believe in God's promise. They will also be those in the age to come who believe in God's Messiah that will comprise a final remnant out of the nations in the kingdom age. All three are one. God is three in one. So are God's people three in one.

Romans 4:17-22

God's promise to Abraham was that he would have a son from his wife Sarah. As the years passed by without this promise being fulfilled it became physically impossible for Sarah or Abraham to have a child in the natural. Their bodies were old. However, Abraham did not focus on the impossibility of his situation and how his age and Sarah's age seemed to contradict the promise which God gave him. Scripture here described "*the deadness of Sarah's womb*". This means it was impossible in the natural for her to have children. However, with God we do not consider what is impossible.

What is impossible to God? We are dealing with someone who created the universe, the stars, the moon, the sun, and the earth. He is the one who created man in the first place. Jesus said nothing is impossible with God.

Abraham believed God. Even though what God said was impossible in the natural he still believed God and trusted in the promise which God gave him. Abraham did not stagger in unbelief, but instead he was strong in faith and gave glory to God. Nothing is impossible with God. Abraham was completely persuaded in his mind that what God promised he was also able to perform. As a result, God counted Abraham as righteous because of his faith.

Paul taught that our relationship with God was based completely on faith. We do not have any part in God's work except to believe in what he did. Our part is to believe in the Son of God. Our part is to believe in the promise God made to Adam and Eve and continued to make to every man whom he chose. He chose Abraham and told him the Seed he promised would come through him.

God's promise is true. The nation of Israel came from Abraham, and from the nation of Israel came our Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's word is true and God's promise is true.

The Lord looks for men who believe in him. He looks for those who stand upon his promises and upon his word and are not moved. Let us not stagger in unbelief, but instead let us be strong in faith and give glory to God. Nothing is impossible with God.

Romans 4:23-25

The account of Abraham was not only written for Abraham's sake, but also for us to follow his example. We also can receive righteousness by faith when we believe in the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Jesus was delivered over to death on a cross for our sins and offenses, and he was raised from the dead again so we could be justified by God. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins, justification, redemption, deliverance from sin, self, the world, and the devil. The Lord has done it all for us.

We enter these blessings by faith in the Lord Jesus. Just like God imputed to Abraham righteousness because of his faith, so also today God imputes his righteousness to those who believe and trust in him.

In the first three chapters of Romans Paul proved the point that all men are sinners. Some men are flaunted sinners in their idolatry and sexual immorality. Other men are sinners because even though they know the truth of God's law they continue to break God's laws. Other men are also sinners because they know the truth in their conscience and yet continue to act in contradiction to what their conscience tells them is right and wrong. All men are sinners and all men are in need of salvation from God's wrath and punishment against sin.

In chapter 4 we read that God provides a way for men to escape his wrath. He did this by providing his son the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice for our sins on the cross. In this way God could be just and holy in his hatred towards sin, and yet still justify those who commit those crimes against his law. He is just and is also the justifier of sinners.

He has done all of this through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God himself placed us into his Son Jesus Christ and united us with him. We are united together with the Son of God and God counts us righteous as His Son.

Romans Chapter 5

Romans 5:1

Most people do not have peace with God. They might have peace with themselves, or peace with their neighbors, or peace with their family, but they have no peace with God. Most people never consider peace with God. God does not enter their mind at all. They do not understand that a sword of God's wrath hangs over their head and is ready to fall upon them.

I have known some unusual people who found peace with God. I've known men whose lives were dedicated to destruction through drugs, violence, and drunkenness who turned to God and in a moment found peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives were completely transformed by this experience of finding peace with God.

The world system offers false peace through money, immorality, or relationships. This peace must be continuously maintained through new and exciting experiences. The soul must be stimulated through intense conversations on politics, or religion, or social topics. They must constantly seek exotic experiences in order to maintain peace of mind. It is temporary, however. It does not last. At night the loneliness of separation from the Creator creeps back up to them. They cannot put it in words other than to say they are lonely and sad. This is why so many turn to alcohol, drugs, or sex. This ache in the soul is something we were created with. Only the Most High God expressed in the Son of God Jesus Christ can fill that emptiness in the heart of man.

We can have peace with God right now. Today. Turn to God and confess you are wrong and he is right. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe he died for your sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. He is able to save to the uttermost all those who come to God by him because he lives forever to make intercession for us. He is our high priest forever. Read **Psalms 85:8**.

Romans 5:2

It is by the Lord Jesus Christ we have access by faith into the grace in which we stand. We stand by faith in the grace revealed to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace is displayed through the Lord Jesus Christ and by believing in him we stand. There is no other foundation but the Lord Jesus Christ. If we try to build on anything else we will fail. God designed us so that only when we live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can we find purpose and meaning. God provides grace to us when we believe in his Son.

We have access by faith to approach God's throne of grace with confidence because of what Jesus did in his death, burial, and resurrection. He paid the penalty for our sins in his death. He was buried. On the third day he rose again. We are justified and made righteous through the finished and completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God imputes his own righteousness to us when we believe the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Read **Hebrews 4:16**.

We have access by faith to the throne of God's grace. We can approach God with confidence not because of who we are or what we have done but completely upon the work which Christ accomplished for us. God himself places us into Christ and counts us as righteous. We exchange the rags of our self-righteousness for the white robes of his righteousness.

Not only this but we also rejoice because of the hope which is in front of us. What is this hope? It is the hope of the glory of God which will be revealed at the return of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth in power and in glory. He will receive us unto himself that where he is we will be also. We will receive new and resurrected bodies which will be like his body. We will be with the Lord forever. This is the blessed hope of the church in these last days. Our hope is in the return of the Lord Jesus. He will catch away his bride. Read **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**.

Romans 5:3-5

To "glory in tribulation" is a foreign idea to unbelievers. They may understand how an athlete or outdoors man may enjoy the rigor of discipline and training in a sports endeavor but in general people do not comprehend how tribulation is something a man would glory in.

Only someone born again by the Spirit of God can truly appreciate the words here. We glory in tribulation. This means Paul could see the importance and value of hardship, opposition, and challenges. He learned through experience the value of weakness.

The value of weakness is learning to trust in the Lord. These troubles, combined with faith in the Lord, produce a specific quality in a man. This quality is described as patience. As we continue to endure through trials we develop spiritual muscle. This is seen through the patience of a man of God enduring tribulation.

This patience builds a pattern of experience in life. As the man of God looks back on the trials he endured he has hope. This hope is based on the knowledge of God's faithfulness and God's provision. God provides and God protects. As we see the Lord working repeatedly it fills us with hope for the future.

God who was faithful to us is the same God who will be faithful in the future. We have hope because the Lord Jesus is the God of hope. (**Romans 15:13**).

We are not ashamed to hope in the Lord Jesus. We see his goodness and mercy in our lives. He fills our heart with his love by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are enabled by God's Spirit to love others. God fills the believer with his love.

I am reminded of Corrie ten Boom. She shared in her testimony how she was confronted with one of the former German guards at a concentration camp. This man approached her as a new believer in Christ after one of her meetings. She said she felt the power of God's Spirit coursing through her arm when she reached out and took his hand and expressed God's love and forgiveness to him.

This love of God lives inside the Christian. He has God's love inside him. He can love his enemies and forgive those who persecute him.

I remember Richard Wurmbrand said he was able to love by God's power the guards in his communist prison who tortured him and other prisoners. This is only achieved by God living in the heart of the Christian.

God fills us with his love. The Holy Spirit lives inside the Christian believer. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:6-8

Sometimes when a new Christian sins he may ask whether he should get saved again. I had new Christians ask me if they should get baptized again after they backslid. My question for them was this: "When did Christ die for you?"

The Bible says while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ died for the ungodly. He did not die for people who were perfect or righteous. Jesus even taught people in his earthly ministry that he did not come to call the righteous but instead sinners to repentance.

A man who believes in the Lord Jesus and is afraid of losing his salvation does not need to be afraid. We are completely secure because when Jesus died for us it was while we were still sinners.

The Lord Jesus loved us at our worst moment in life. When we were lying in a ditch, drunk, covered in filth, even then the Lord Jesus loved us and died for us on the cross.

We do not need to get saved again. Our salvation was bought and paid for before we were ever born.

When we get hold upon this and stand upon this we see it is not necessary to go through water baptism over and over. We do not need to get saved again. All we need to do is believe what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us. Jesus died for the ungodly.

Christ Jesus came into this world to save that which was lost. He came looking for sinners. Read **1 Timothy 1:15**.

Romans 5:9-11

We are saved from the wrath of God through the blood which the Lord Jesus shed upon the cross at Calvary. When we were God's enemies Christ died for us. He died on the cross for us when we were still in our unbelief and sins. Through the atonement Jesus made we were reconciled to God. Now that we are saved by the blood of Jesus how much more then are we saved by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not just die on the cross. He was buried. And on the third day he rose from the grave. He rose up out of that grave. He spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly and triumphed over them in it.

We rejoice today in the Lord Jesus Christ because we have received atonement. What does this mean? Atonement? In the Old Testament once a year the high priest would enter the most holy place with a sacrifice for the sins of the nation of Israel. This was called the day of Atonement. This was when the blood of the Lamb was shed. This covered the sins of Israel until the time when the Lord Jesus came and fulfilled all these types and shadows. This pointed to the work which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled when he died, was buried, and rose again.

The Lord Jesus made atonement for our sins. Our sins are now under the blood and we are cleansed. Our sins are not just covered but cleansed. We have been sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb and we are now white as snow. We no longer wait for the wrath of God to fall on us because God poured out his wrath on his own Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can't thank the Lord Jesus enough for what he did. Let us offer him praise and thanksgiving. Let us offer him our lives in thanks for what he did.

Romans 5:12-17

Here we see the state of man from Adam and the state of man through the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know of a scripture which more concisely describes the human situation.

Sin entered the world through Adam's fall and thereafter death passed upon all men. All men born of Adam die because of sin. Death came upon all men even before God gave the law to Moses and Israel. However, sins were not counted against men in a legal sense until this law was given. After the law was given men not only died because of sin but they were charged guilty with the knowledge of sins.

Through the one man, Adam, sin came. In a like manner through one man, Jesus Christ, the gift of righteousness came to man. Through Adam all men die. Through the Lord Jesus Christ all men have the offer of eternal life.

The gospel is described for us in this passage. We have the choice between death and life before us. Our bodies die because of Adam but we receive the gift of life through the Lord Jesus Christ. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the gift of eternal life. Our sins are cleansed from us and we are made righteous. God justified us through the atonement and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The biblical framework of thinking is described here. Men are sinners and in desperate need of the Savior Jesus Christ. It is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the gift of eternal life. If we fail to receive this gift from the Lord then we shall perish in our sins. Not only will our physical body die but our soul will experience what the Bible calls the "second" death. This second death is eternal separation from God. Separation from God means the Christ rejecting soul endures eternity burning in a lake of fire. Those are the facts and as simply as I can present them from the Bible.

There is no excuse for any man on this earth. God provided a way for us to escape from his just wrath against sin. His provision is his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through him.

Romans 5:18-21

What was the offense of the one? This points back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve was deceived and Adam sinned in eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they did this condemnation came on all men because all men came through Adam and Eve.

Through the righteousness of the one man, Jesus Christ, the free gift of eternal life came to all men. Just as in Adam all men die so in Jesus Christ all men can live. To be taken out of Adam and placed into Christ Jesus only requires one thing of us: faith. We simply believe the gospel and God himself takes us out of Adam and places us into Christ Jesus. We are translated out of death and darkness and into eternal life and light.

God's law was given so that men could see how heinous their sins are. The law does not make men righteous; it only points out how sinful we truly are.

The law causes sin to abound. Sin is clearly seen as exceedingly sinful. However, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. God's grace is greater than all our sins.

Sin reigned to bring death in us but grace reigns to bring righteousness and eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are no longer under the law of sin and death. We are no longer under God's wrath and God's law. Instead, we are now under God's grace and receive eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans Chapter 6

Romans 6:1-2

This question might have arose because of the declaration that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. Some confused Paul as saying that since we are not under law but under grace we could therefore commit sin. This was not what Paul said. He needed to address the question because this was a problem which fallen men get into. They turn the grace of God into a license to sin. We know in Paul's letters grace does not give us permission to sin.

Read **Titus 2:11-13**. This clarifies that grace was not a doctrine which provided an excuse to sin. Paul's answer to this question is a resounding "No!" Grace does not teach men to sin or promote sin. It does provide us with God's power to live an overcoming life.

Here we read the revelation the Holy Spirit gave Paul of how a Christian overcomes self, sin, the world, and the devil. The path to overcome sin is the same path taken to receive forgiveness. The same gospel which justified also sanctified. After we were saved by faith in God's grace through the finished work of Christ we were also sanctified by it. We were delivered from sin because God united us with His Son in death, burial, and resurrection. This was what Romans chapter 6 goes into.

God's grace is the death blow to the power of sin. Sin is no longer able to reign in the life of those who abide in God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

There are men who teach a false message of grace. They imply that men can live in sin. They turn the grace of God into a license to sin. This was exposed in the early church. (**Jude 1:4**).

Men who teach we can live in sin because we are under grace do not understand grace. The grace of God does not provide an excuse for men to live sinful lives. It is God's grace that teaches us to live holy lives. Grace teaches a life of holiness, purity, and righteousness. God's grace sanctifies the Christian who abides in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's grace is the power from God to overcome the downward pull of sin and death. A man who receives God's grace is recognized by humility, holiness, and purity of life.

Romans 6:2-3

Paul did not explain what he proclaimed in these verses. He just put it out there. Dead to sin? Baptized into his death? It takes time to meditate on what Paul taught. It is important to take as much time as necessary to get hold on what Paul expressed. It is one of the foundations of the Christian life. If we do not grasp what Paul taught in this chapter there will be little victory over sin in the believer's life. A

man can be saved and live in continual spiritual defeat. However, Paul taught something which can remedy the problem of sin.

How does a man find victory over sin in his life? Is the path to victory in asking other people to hold us accountable? Is the path to victory in confessing to everyone our struggles? I've seen people try these methods and they always fail. Accountability to other men does not keep us from sin or prevent us from committing sin. Being honest about our sins with a group of people does not help us. It only keeps us in a continuous state of shame until our hearts harden and we give up. This is not the way to victory over sin.

The way to victory over sin is the same way we receive forgiveness for sin. It is by faith in the gospel. Let us review the message of the gospel. Paul outlined the gospel in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"*

The first point in the gospel is that Christ died for our sins. Paul took that truth in the gospel and applied it to the individual Christian in **Romans 6**. He said what happened to Christ happened to us! How is this possible? I was not even born when Jesus died on the cross. How could I possibly be "in" Christ when he died.

This is where faith in the eternal God comes in. When we believe the gospel God sees us in his Son Jesus Christ. He sees us crucified and dead in Christ Jesus on that cross. We were united together with him. We were made one with Christ.

When a Christian discerns this and grasps the truth by faith he will experience an astounding change. What is true in eternity enters time in the Christian's life. He discovers he is dead to sin. He is dead to it. A dead man is not tempted by sin. A dead man is not tempted by anything really.

Let's not take the analogy of a corpse too far because we know while we are in the body we are alive. As far as God is concerned we are dead in Christ Jesus on that cross. The power of sin is broken in our lives.

I have experienced when I stand in the truth and remember the truth the Holy Spirit applies the truth to me. He makes sure in my life what Christ did is applied to me. He makes sure sin does not reign over me. The Holy Spirit honors the finished work of Jesus Christ.

However, as soon as I move away from the gospel things change. As soon as I try to figure out myself and why I fail or why I am tempted I start sinking. It is like a man who struggles in quicksand. The harder he fights the quicker he sinks beneath the sand. We cannot fight ourselves, we cannot fight sin, we cannot overcome it because it is a real power just like gravity. If a man decided he no longer believed in gravity and jumped off a building he would still fall. No matter how hard he flapped his arms he would still fall like a stone. The power of sin is that real.

But the power of God's grace is stronger. Where sin abounds then grace does much more abound! God's power to live in victory over sin is given to the believing Christian who stands upon the gospel. As long as we continue to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ then we continue to experience God's grace. God's grace is his power to cancel out the power of sin and death. This grace is given to the man who believes the gospel, who stakes his entire life upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. God unites this man with his Son in death. The death of Christ is also the death of sin in us.

We are dead to sin. How can we live in it any longer? We can't. A dead man can no longer commit sin. He can only be buried.

Romans 6:4

After we died with Christ we were buried with him. Don't rationalize this. Human logic does not work in comprehending what Paul said here. By faith in the gospel God took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). This was the work of God from first to last, from beginning to end. Our part is only to believe. Jesus was once asked what we should do. What is our work? Jesus said that our work was to believe in the Son of God. (**John 6:27-29**).

Believing in the gospel really is "*work*". It is a decision the Christian makes each day. Just like Israel had to get out of their tent and go pick up manna every day so also the Christian must believe the gospel every day.

I don't know if I've heard a preacher teach what I say here but I know in my heart and from my experience it is true. I must believe the gospel in order to experience victory over sin and self. I must turn my eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ in order to walk above my circumstances. God does not force me to do this. Just like Peter had to get out of the boat I must also get out of my boat of unbelief every single day.

Believing in doctrine is not enough. A relationship with the Lord is what we need. There is only one way to have this daily relationship with the Father and that is upon the basis of the gospel.

I am buried with Christ. This means a death blow fell upon my "self" life. Paul said, "*it is no longer I that live*". (**Galatians 2:20**). Self dies. When self dies sin loses it's power. Sin cannot reign where the self life is dead and buried. No wonder Jesus taught us to deny self and take up the cross. There is no other way to walk in the Spirit.

Remember, God does this for us. As we abide in the gospel the Holy Spirit applies the truth to us. He makes what Christ accomplished active in our present life. It is not something we can do. We trust in the Lord to live through us.

He does this by raising us from death. We were buried. But we did not stay in the grave. Three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Death could not hold him. He rose from the dead on the third day. Because Jesus overcame we also overcome in him. We are in Christ. When Christ arose from the tomb we also rose from the tomb in him.

Now we live a new life. Our old life is gone. It is dead; it is gone. We are no longer a drug addict, a drunk, a thief, a murderer, an adulterer. That old life is gone. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

2 Corinthians 5:17 is one of the first Bible verses I learned as a new Christian and I am so glad I did. I memorized it and the Holy Spirit made this real to me. He showed me the truth that I was no longer the old person I was before believing. When I believed the gospel I became a completely new man in Christ Jesus. Unless a man stands upon this truth he can never change.

It is possible in human determination to lay aside the liquor bottle or the drugs. It is possible to do this in human strength. I've seen people do it. However, laying down a liquor bottle does not give a person spiritual life. A man cannot have spiritual life unless he believes the gospel. Let me also add quickly that we cannot add anything more to the gospel. If we add any philosophy, system, or steps to the gospel then we empty it completely of its power. We become what the Bible describes as "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*" (**2 Timothy 3:5**).

The old life of sin was buried. We are now raised with Christ to walk in a new life. This new life is the Spirit filled life. It is a life of victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil.

We must remember this every day. We cannot let this out of our mind for a single day. When you forget the gospel you begin to slip away. You will backslide I guarantee you. If your mind is overthrown by the cares of life then you will not experience spiritual victory. You must keep your mind fixed on Jesus Christ. You must get out of bed every morning, go to God in prayer, and confess to him, "*I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live. I died in Christ. I was buried with him. I am risen now with Christ. Thank you Father for placing me into Christ Jesus. I thank you that you have done all of the work from first to last. Nothing depends upon me. I simply believe your word today. I believe the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. I believe in your word and the gospel. Thank you Father. In Jesus name. Amen.*"

It is so simple that men walk right past it every day. It is so easy. Yet because of human pride we look for exotic religions, philosophies, or systems. Men want to have something they can work at. They don't want to just believe. They want to do something. But there is nothing we can do to change our spiritual condition. Only the Holy Spirit can make us into a new creation. And he will only do this for the man who believes in Christ alone and the finished work of Christ.

Romans 6:5

Throughout the New Testament we see the teaching of death and life. Jesus talked about a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying so it could bring new life.

Read **John 12:24**. In the context Jesus talked about the corn of wheat he was sought by Gentiles. Jesus looked ahead to the time when he would not only minister to Israel but gave his life on Calvary for all men. He died on the cross so we can receive eternal life.

Paul took this and applied it to himself personally. In his letters we see that he talked about himself dying so that others would receive life. Read **2 Corinthians 4:10-12**. This is a spiritual principle of dying and resurrection. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are central and of paramount importance to the Christian. This event in history is beyond comparison.

In Romans Paul taught us that our being planted together in the likeness of the Lord's death meant that we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

After the Lord Jesus rose from the dead he had a particular type of body which could appear and disappear. Yet he was not a spirit because he could eat food and was touched by his disciples. He had a resurrection body.

Christians will receive a resurrected body like the Lord Jesus. As we look forward to the blessed hope of the church, or the "*harpazo*", or the "*catching away*" of believers, we are encouraged because scripture teaches us we will receive a new body. This mortal body will be swallowed up by life. Read **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**.

Romans 6:6

This is not the only place in the New Testament where we can find the phrase "old man". Here are some more references for this phrase: **Ephesians 4:22**, **Colossians 3:9**. After reading these verses on the "old man" I understand that this phrase speaks about the self-life. It points to living according to the principle of self-worship and self-love. This is the principle of sin and Satan.

Notice how Paul said we need to "*put off*" the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Also, the old man is tied in with lying to people. The old man is a liar. He is deceitful. He follows the lie and not the truth.

When a man is born again by the Holy Spirit as a result of believing the gospel of Jesus Christ he receives a new nature which follows the truth instead of the lie.

However, the old man will attempt to reassert itself if we are not vigilant to abide in the gospel. The gospel is the message of the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** details the gospel for us. It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul outlines here in Romans 6 how the gospel applied to the individual Christian.

God placed us into his Son Jesus Christ. Read **1 Corinthians 1:30**. This united us together with Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. The self-life, also known as the "*old man*", died in Christ on the cross. He was crucified and he died. Now we are resurrected in Christ to walk in a new life. This new life is also called the "*new man*". Read **Ephesians 4:24**.

When the self-life dies then the power of sin can no longer control us. A man who abides in Christ Jesus is dead to sin's power because he effectively is denying himself when he takes the name of Christ. You cannot exalt self (your "name") and also follow Jesus at the same time. Anyone who is united to Christ has died with Christ and their self-life old man is dead.

As a result of this death sin can no longer reign. The body of sin is done away with. It is buried in the grave and does not live again. The only one who came out of the grave was the Lord Jesus Christ. We are raised to a new life in Jesus Christ. We are no longer servants to sin. We are not slaves any longer to the passions and desires of "self". We are no longer worshiping self. We do not live for self any longer. The old man is dead. We are now a new creation in Christ Jesus.

If this seems difficult to understand then be patient. Pray and meditate on this chapter. If you earnestly seek the Lord he will reveal to you the truth. It is important to grasp this in order to live in consistent victory over self and sin.

Romans 6:7-10

Since we died with Christ we are free from sin. Since we died with Christ we believe we shall also live with him. Our death with Christ is assurance of our life with him also. Since Christ was raised from the dead he does not die anymore. Death no longer reigns over him. The Lord Jesus Christ defeated death. Death no longer has power over him. He died once for our sins. Now he lives with God forever. Jesus broke the power of death.

Men live their life in view of their end. This is why men are frantic to live as much as they can. They want to experience as much as possible while they have life in their bodies. Men are driven to experience as much as possible while there is still time. However, this frantic activity only brings them into more bondage to self and to sin. Read **Hebrews 2:14-15**. Man throughout his lifetime is subject to bondage because of the fear of death. The devil had the power of death but no more. The Lord Jesus defeated the devil through his death, burial, and resurrection.

As a result, those who believe in the Lord Jesus are delivered from the fear of death. They are no longer driven by the old man, the flesh, and the power of sin to experience as much in this life as possible. They have freedom to deny self and live for God in purity, holiness, and righteousness.

They are no longer driven by the craving, greedy self-life to experience everything possible. The power of lust, covetousness, and idolatry is broken. Believing in the Lord Jesus delivers a man from the fear of death which as a result sets him free from the compulsion to sin.

The fear of death is a fountain of bondage. It is a cruel task master. Fear drives men to do stupid things with their lives.

However, a man who stands by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ no longer is tormented by the fear of death. He knows deep in his soul that he lives forever with the Lord Jesus. He no longer is moved by the human fear of death. In Christ he experiences victory over death, hell, and the grave. A good chapter in the Bible to read in relation to this is **First Corinthians 15**. It goes over in great detail the resurrection of the body and the complete defeat of death. Here is a summary verse in that chapter: "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*" (**1 Corinthians 15:55**) Also, this: "*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (**1 Corinthians 15:57**).

Romans 6:11-14

When we get to this part about reckoning I used to think: "*...now here is something I am supposed to work at*". I thought all of this information was just "positional" truth but now I have to do this work of "reckoning". This means I have to fight the flesh. This means I must discipline myself now.

But that is wrong thinking. Reckoning myself to be dead to sin has nothing to do with me striving to keep myself under control. It has nothing to do with striving to keep the ten commandments, either.

Reckoning simply means I believe that Christ did everything for me. I simply rest in what the Lord Jesus did. There is no more striving, no more trying to control myself, no more fear of failure. Instead, I believe what the word of God says. I reckon. This means I agree God's word is true. What God's word says about Christ and about me I believe. I simply accept that God has placed me into Christ Jesus. What Jesus did two thousand years ago in time-space history was accounted as a fact in my life today. I may be removed from what Christ did by two thousand years in time-space history, but in eternity I am united together with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

What is more true? The temporary feelings of my body, my mind, and my emotions? Or what God says is the truth? What God does is more true than what I can think or feel in my body. What God says is more true than what I think.

I agree with God that he is true. The testimony of God's word is true. I reckon it for myself to be true. My reckoning does not make it true. My reckoning of the truth allows the Holy Spirit into my life. When I agree the gospel is true then the Holy Spirit moves into my spirit and applies the truth to me. He includes me in the eternal truth of what God accomplished in his Son Jesus Christ.

This sets men free from self, from sin, from the world system, and from the tyranny of the devil. We are no longer enslaved to sin and death.

We should no longer allow sin to operate in our lives. How do we accomplish this? Through faith in the finished work of Christ. By confessing and believing the gospel. When we abide in this, live in this, walk in this, confess this: then we will discover the power of God coursing through us to set us free moment by moment from the influence of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Our body no longer belongs to us. Our body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our heart cries out to God: "Make this temple holy!" We no longer give ourselves over to sin.

If we sin then we humble our heart and go back to Calvary. We confess our sin to God and he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Read **1 John 1:9**. When we keep the gospel in our heart and mind, however, we will not fall. We will walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. We submit ourselves to God and the devil flees from us. God's word comes out of our mouth like a sharp, double-edged sword and drives away every demon, all darkness, all temptation. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

Our deliverance is simply through faith in Jesus. Jesus did it all. He paid the price. We are forgiven and cleansed. We are delivered and set free from the power of sin. Death no longer holds sway over us. We are not afraid to put aside this temporary tent of the body, and even look forward to being swallowed up by the life of our resurrection body.

Romans 6:15-18

Paul asked the same question again which he asked in verse 1 of this chapter. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? This is a question that a Jewish person might ask. They think the law is what keeps them righteous but Paul taught the law only demonstrated how sinful we are. The law does not impart righteousness. Righteousness is a free gift because of what Christ did for us. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us as a free gift when we believe the gospel. Grace does not lead people into sin.

Paul used the illustration of a servant and a master. Sin is a master. Also, righteousness is a master. In reality these are the only choices men have. We can choose to be a servant of sin by continuing in unbelief. Or we can become a servant of righteousness by believing the gospel. God does give man this choice. We would be unable to believe if the Lord did not give us another option but he has provided for us another option than sin and death.

Our option is to choose to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel we are grafted into God's kingdom. We receive the life of the Holy Spirit. We become a part of God's plan and his kingdom. We are no longer servants of self, sin, and Satan. Instead, we become a servant of righteousness, holiness, and Jesus Christ. The choice is clear: life or death. Slavery to righteousness or slavery to sin.

Unbelievers are deceived by pride into thinking they are free. However, they are not free. They are slaves to sin. They are in bondage to their own passions and lusts. They are prisoners and deceived by the devil into building their own prison house.

I've talked with people who did not want to be a Christian because they thought they would lose their freedom. Their idea of a Christian was following rules. This is the basic idea unbelievers have about Christians. It is a lie. They do not understand that being a servant of righteousness is true freedom.

My choice is to walk in freedom from sin and to be a slave of righteousness. My goal is purity, righteousness, and holiness. My goal is to be a servant of righteousness.

Romans 6:19-22

Paul wrote in human terms so they could understand. What Paul saw in revelation from the Lord was probably more than he expressed but he could only teach these Christians at a certain level because of where they were at. He condescended to teach them at the level they were at instead of speaking over their head. This showed his motive was for their benefit and not to build up himself.

When men follow after self they go from iniquity to iniquity. This describes an ever worsening situation for the unbeliever. They do not stay static in a condition of unbelief and sin but increase in iniquity. Living in this manner results in a certain outcome. Paul called this "fruit". Paul said the fruit of the sinful life results in shame. The fruit is shameful. The end result of the unbeliever's life is death. It all ends in death. It is meaningless.

However, a life set free from sin and devoted in service to God results in a much different outcome. This fruit is holiness. It is wholesome and good and pure. It is of good report. The end result of a life lived in service to God is everlasting life.

There are two distinct paths in life. One path is the broad road to destruction. This path is filled with a shameful outcome. It ends in eternal death which is separation from God.

The other path is a life of faith in Christ Jesus. This life results in holiness with the outcome of eternal life. At the end of this earthly life there is eternal life and fellowship with God.

Why do men choose death? Why do men choose separation from God? It is because men love self. They are worshipers of self and controlled by sin which blinds them in unbelief.

Paul described the sad condition of unbelievers. **Ephesians 4:17-19**, *"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."* This is truly a sad condition to live in.

The believer's life is completely opposite of this. His mind is engaged with what is eternal, his understanding is filled with light, he is in close fellowship with God and his heart is filled with the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and quick to deny self, take up the cross, and obey the Lord Jesus.

Romans 6:23

This Bible verse is used a lot in evangelism. It is part of a witnessing outline called *"The Romans Road"* which also includes **Romans 3:23 and Romans 10:9-10, 13**. With these verses it is easy to share a basic outline of biblical salvation.

We can see in this verse a contrast between death and life. Here again we are given a choice of either death or life. It has always interested me that death is tied in with wages whereas life is tied in with a gift.

When I think of wages I think of a job. I punch the time clock, put in my day of work, and at the end of the time period I expect to be paid wages. This is how the world system works. The problem is when people attempt to apply this same idea of earning wages to their relationship with God.

In one sense God is our employer. **Colossians 3:23-24** make it clear we should do our job as working for the Lord, not for men, because the Lord rewards us. Let us not confuse rewards with salvation. That is another mistake people make.

Salvation cannot be earned like a wage. People still try to do this. They work really hard to do good things, improve their life, get rid of flaunted sin like alcoholism or drug addiction. All that is well and good but it does not earn salvation. We cannot expect to do good works and earn a ticket into heaven.

Why is this? For one thing, it would be a slap in the face of what the Lord Jesus did by dying on a cross. Before Jesus went to the cross he spent an agonizing night praying to the heavenly Father and asking if there was any other way that this cup of pain could pass from him. Nevertheless, he submitted his will to God's plan of saving mankind. Why? Because there is no other way for man to be saved. There is no other way to redeem mankind except through what Jesus Christ did in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Also, God will not be in debt to man. Man can not do anything to make God indebted. God is the giver of everything. He created the universe and he created mankind. We have nothing really we can offer to God.

Why do we think doing good works cancels out sin we did in the past? This does not even work in a human court of justice. We cannot persuade a judge not to sentence us if we are guilty of a crime by reasoning with him about the good things we have done. I'm not saying it won't get a man a lighter

sentence if he has done a lot of good, but the good works cannot cancel out the crime. A guilty conviction requires a sentence. However, even though a human judge might be swayed in his emotion by a criminal's humble plea, God will not be. God cannot be just if he lets sinners get away with their crimes. The entire universe would fall apart if God did this.

However, because Jesus took the penalty of our sins, God will justify any man who puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way God can be just and also the justifier of the sinner. He has made a way to reconcile us to himself through the work of the Son of God.

The attitude that since we did good works we therefore deserve God's mercy does not work. The wages of sin demand God's wrath and punishment. God's judgment upon sin is death. Every man who is born into this world will die physically. It is appointed to men to die once and after this God's judgment. (**Hebrews 9:27**).

The good news is this: forgiveness and eternal life is a free gift. God does not want any man to die in his sins. It is not God's will for anyone to perish in their sins. Instead, he offers the free gift of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ. Any man who rejects this free offer of eternal life is insane. Unbelief makes men insane. Pride makes men insane. Just like the devil. Insane.

Let us choose life today. Today is the day of salvation. Let us not choose to go our own way in unbelief. Instead, let us humble our hearts, confess to God, and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans Chapter 7

Romans 7:1-4

Paul directed his attention to those who knew the law. This probably meant he addressed Jewish people within the Christian church. He taught them the Christian interpretation of God's law by using principles in God's law. From this we see the truth that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching. Read **2 Timothy 3:16**.

Paul used the example of how in the framework of God's law a married woman was bound to her husband as long as he was alive. However, if her husband died then she was no longer bound by this law of marriage. The death of her husband made the law of marriage irrelevant in her new situation.

In the same way, through the death of Jesus Christ we were set free from the law of God. I wish more people in the church could understand this. Paul taught that Christians were no longer bound to the law of God. The purpose of God's law was to show the exceeding sinfulness of mankind. The law of God did not give men righteousness, but only served to condemn men in their sins.

The death of Christ Jesus on the cross makes the law of God irrelevant to the Christian's situation. As Paul demonstrated this did not make the Christian a law breaker but introduced a new way of living in righteousness. When Christ died we died with him and the law of God no longer applies to us. God's law does not apply to someone who is dead. A dead man cannot break God's law.

When we were raised together with Christ in resurrection we received a new way of life. We now fulfill the righteousness of God's law by living in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through

the Christian who abides in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit honors the man who rests completely in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He honors him by filling him with his presence and delivering him from the influence of sin and death.

We bring forth fruit because we live by the power of Jesus Christ who dwells in us. We no longer are called law breakers even though we are dead to the law. We are alive to God because we were raised together with Christ. We now live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He abides in us, making us holy, sanctifying us, and preparing us as a bride for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:5-6

The phrase "*when we were in the flesh*" points back to the "*old man*" in **Romans 6:6**, **Ephesians 4:22**, and **Colossians 3:9**. "*In the flesh*" is a description of living for self, self-worship, and self-love. It is manifested by pride.

When we live according to the old man, or the flesh, then we have the motion of sins working through us. The power of sin courses through our lives when we live according to the principle of self-worship. This motion of sin is inflamed and brought into sharp contrast by God's law. The result of living according to sin, self, the flesh, or the old man is an outcome of death. Our fruit is death. The result is death.

Now, however, since God united us together with his Son Jesus Christ we are dead to the law. When Christ died we died with him and we died to the law. The law is no longer our master. It was only a teacher to bring us to Jesus Christ. It existed to show us how helpless in sin we were.

Now that we believe the gospel and are united with Christ in death and burial and resurrection we no longer live under God's law. The law of God does not apply to us. In this new creation of life we are no longer driven by self-worship, but instead we worship the one true God Jesus Christ.

Now we live according to the Spirit. We serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit because we believe and abide in the gospel. Men are always servants. We are either servants of self and sin, or we are servants of the Lord Jesus. There is no in-between. Serving self is slavery to sin and Satan. If a man does not believe the gospel he is by default worshiping self.

Serving in the newness of the Spirit enables us to live in freedom from the principle of self. We no longer interpret the world around us from a self-centered filter. Instead, we are enabled to have compassion, empathy, and serve others. The Holy Spirit expresses the life of Jesus Christ through us. We are vessels of honor and instruments of righteousness in God's hands.

We do not serve God according to the oldness of the letter. Many people who are sincere become confused about serving God according to the letter instead of in the newness of the Spirit. If you serve God according to the letter instead of the Spirit you experience consistent moral failure in your life. You battle with sins over and over and do not find freedom.

You can only be free from besetting sins by resting in the completed, finished work of Christ. This is the newness of the Spirit. Amen.

Romans 7:7-13

What happens when you put a vile murderer in the room with someone who is of utmost honorable character? You see a stark contrast between the two. It is easier to see the disgusting quality of the criminal when you put him beside the heroic, honorable man. What is happening is that a clear contrast has been made. But in the end both of these men are only men. The best of men are at their best men.

However, what happens when you compare a vile criminal with the holy God? Now the quality of the criminal becomes exceedingly vile and disgusting. In comparison with the perfection of God we cannot even bear to look upon the criminal.

Paul said God's law was how the Lord God revealed himself. He is perfect in every way. He is holy. However, the presence of the law did not remove the corruption in men. It only brings it in stark contrast. We see our sin clearly when we put ourselves in the light of God's law.

The law is holy, righteous, and good. However, men are controlled by the power of sin. By the presence of God's law men see clearly their sinful lives. The law is good, but men are sinful. The purpose of God's law is to demonstrate the contrast between the perfection of God and the sinfulness of mankind.

It is this law which acts as a teacher pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in Christ that we can receive the righteousness which is by faith in the Son of God.

Galatians 3:24-25, *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

Romans 7:14-25

A clue to understanding this passage is to notice how many times Paul spoke in the first person "I". He is constantly pointing to himself.

Perhaps Paul did this on purpose, and if not, it still serves the purpose of this text to recognize self-worship is the essence of sin. The power of sin working in us is our bent towards self-worship, self-image, and self-love. This is the body of death. Self worship is death. It is a black hole, a bottomless abyss, and will suck a person right out into the outer darkness of eternity. Self-worship separates us from the living God.

Paul's struggle was with the power of sin within self, in what he calls the "body of death". I take this in a literal and in the sense of a metaphor. The body of death represents all of man which is independent and separate from God. It represents all the motion of sin within self which drives us further and further away from faith in the living God.

It is also literal, in that we exist in a body drawn downward by inevitable death, decay, and corruption. There is no escape from the curse of death while we exist in this temporary house of clay. Read **2 Corinthians 5:4**. Who saves us from this body of death? Jesus Christ abolished death and rose again the third day. Read **2 Timothy 1:10**.

When we trust in him and put our faith in him then God unites us together with the Lord Jesus. We are one with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. Because he overcame death and the grave we also have overcome. At the last day we will see God in resurrected bodies. Read **Job 19:25-26**.

Romans Chapter 8

Romans 8:1

This chapter contains profound promises and deserves to be memorized and meditated upon as often as possible. We have learned in the book of Romans that man is a sinner and is worthy of God's condemnation. God made a way through his Son Jesus Christ for men to be reconciled to God. He made it possible through the Lord Jesus for God to be just and also justify sinners.

We have learned that all men are under sin. The purpose of God's law is to show how exceedingly sinful we are. Men are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Men who put their faith in Jesus Christ are slaves of righteousness leading to holiness with the result of eternal life.

All this is the work of God from first to last. The righteous man lives by faith and does not depend upon obeying God's law to earn righteousness. The righteous man lives by faith in the Son of God Jesus Christ.

We learned God placed the believer into Christ Jesus and united him together with the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. We were delivered from sin, self, the world, and the devil. We are no longer slaves to sin but are now servants of God.

As we look at **Romans 8** we learn the secret of the victorious Christian life is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies the truth of what Jesus accomplished to the believer's life. He causes the man who believes and abides in the gospel to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

There is therefore now no condemnation for the man who is in Christ Jesus. This man is no longer a worshiper of self and does not walk in agreement with the old man, the flesh, and the body of death. No, instead he walks in agreement with the truth in the gospel. As a result he is no longer under any condemnation. He does not trust in himself, but trusts completely in what the Lord Jesus did for him and what the Holy Spirit does through him.

The Holy Spirit works in the life of this man because he is in Christ. God the Father places the believer into Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:30**), and accounts what Christ did to the believer. We receive the righteousness of Christ by faith. The Father counts it, the Lord Jesus accomplished it, and the Holy Spirit applies it to the believer.

From first to last, all of the work was done by God. What part does a Christian do in all of this? The Christian believes the gospel. The work of the Christian is to believe the gospel and abide in the gospel day after day. Today is the day of salvation. Every day he believes. He does not depart from the gospel. He continues to trust in Jesus with simple, child-like faith. In this way, he topples the power of sin, destroys the work of the devil, and overcomes the system of the world.

How does a man get this? How does a man get in Christ? Believe the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).

Romans 8:2

The word "law" was not used in the sense of a human legal framework. This was not talking about law in the sense of morality as in right or wrong. Instead, the word "law" here was used in the sense of a principle which can be relied on to be consistent. Thinking in terms of mathematics might help. There are rules in math that do not change. It is not a matter of right or wrong. The laws in math just are. They are invisible principles which we can understand but which also exist outside of the mind. They are true even if we did not understand them or believe in them. Math is real in this sense and so are the "laws" which Paul described here.

There were two laws mentioned. One was the law of the Spirit of life, and the other law was sin and death. We are familiar with thinking in terms of right and wrong but what we have here are not two opposing forces. The law of the Spirit of life is actually much greater and more powerful than the law of sin and death. We know this because the Spirit of God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

We are trained to think that the ultimate power in this world is death. No one has power over death. No one can escape death. However, someone did overcome death. His name is Jesus Christ. He abolished death! He arose from the dead and now lives in a body which will never die again. He died once and will never die again. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is much stronger and more powerful than the law of sin and death.

How do we get the law of the Spirit of life to work in us? Any sane man would want to receive eternal life. Who in their right mind would want to be subject to the law of sin and death? But men do. Men prefer to live according to the law of sin and death. For most people it is much easier to never believe in the Lord Jesus and to live in whatever way they see fit. The life of unbelief is a life controlled by the law of sin and death. Every man who denies the gospel of Jesus Christ is controlled and enslaved by sin and death. This law works in their body, controls their mind, and tells them how to live their life on this earth.

A man who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ is controlled by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit works through the life of the believer in Christ. The man who believes the gospel walks in the Spirit. He is controlled by the Holy Spirit. When we live according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus we are no longer enslaved to the law of sin and death.

These laws are real whether or not we acknowledge them, understand them, or believe in them.

If a man said he did not believe a moving vehicle could touch him and went and stood out in the middle of a highway his belief would not stop a car from hitting him. Our beliefs do not determine reality. Reality is determined by truth and the one who is truth is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is reality. He is truth.

Believe the truth. Do not agree with the lie. When we do not believe the gospel then we believe lies. We will automatically believe lies when we no longer believe the gospel.

Believing in the gospel results in a man being controlled by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Believing lies will result in a man being controlled by the law of sin and death. This is how the world was created by God. This is how man was created by God.

Romans 8:3-4

In verse 2 we looked at two laws: the *law of the Spirit of **life** in Christ Jesus*, and also the *law of **sin** and **death***.

In verse 3 another law was mentioned, and this law was the moral law God gave through Moses. This included the ten commandments and all the religious, judicial, and national laws given to Israel. This entire package of law could not do something. It could not make people righteous. Why? Not because there was anything wrong with God's law but because men are weak in their sinful flesh.

What is God's remedy for the sin of man? God's law was not the remedy. God's law was the doctor who gave the diagnosis of sin. The remedy is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the remedy for our sins.

God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin and so he condemned the sin in men's flesh. The Lord Jesus put his finger on the true problem of man and that is his sin.

Through Christ Jesus the righteousness of God's law is fulfilled in us. We do not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.

We no longer follow self but now put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus then we walk in the Spirit. When a man does not believe the gospel he walks according to the flesh. Unbelief is walking in the flesh and has a distinct outcome. Faith in the Lord Jesus is walking in the Spirit and has distinct, identifiable result in a man's life.

A man who believes in the Lord Jesus will see the righteousness of God's law fulfilled through him by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates in the life of a man who believes the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

The fulfillment of the law is accomplished in us because we believe the gospel and the Holy Spirit operates on the basis of the finished, completed work of Christ Jesus.

The righteousness of God's law is fulfilled in the man who believes in the Lord Jesus. God gives this man the righteousness of Christ and this righteousness is made manifest through the man's life as he keeps his eyes fixed on Jesus. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Romans 8:5-8

Paul made a contrast between life and death, the flesh and the Spirit, between those who believe and those who do not believe. Those who do not believe engage in self-worship; those who believe the gospel walk in the Spirit and worship the living God.

If a man walks in unbelief he is "*after the flesh*". This means his mind is focused on himself. He thinks continually about everything related to satisfying his need, desires, or lusts. He is consumed with the self-life. This is how the unbeliever lives.

Jesus described the mind-set of the unbeliever. **Matthew 6:31-32**, "*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*"

The word "Gentiles" described people outside the faith. This described those who did not believe and instead lived according to the world system. Their mind is set upon eating, drinking, clothing, and business. This is what they think about every day. They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. Unbelievers rely upon self for provision and protection. They are their own prize. They worship self.

The believer is not like this. For the Christian the Lord is the provider, protection, and prize. He worships the living God. Those who are after the Spirit have their mind set upon the things of the Spirit. To live with a carnal mind is death. Self-worship is death.

It is like a star in the universe which implodes upon itself and becomes a black hole. This is a good example of the soul dedicated to self. It is like a star which implodes and sucks everything into itself and dies. This is a picture of death. To be carnally minded is death. To put self first is death. To rely upon self is death. Men today make self reliance a virtue, but this is the world system's inversion of the truth. Self reliance is not a virtue. It is a curse.

The carnal mind is an enemy of God. It does not believe in God and therefore has no point of reference except it's own self. This is what self worship is all about. Self worship is relativism. There is no outside point of reference for the soul which does not believe in God.

Men like this make a career their god, they make their families their god, they make philosophy or man-made systems of religion their god. They even make Bible doctrines their god.

However, the carnal mind is an enemy of the living God. The carnal mind is not subject to God's law and neither can be. These are the ones upon whom the curse of God's law falls. The law was made for the rebel and the self-worshiping man. A man who has a carnal mind cannot please God.

There is only one way to please God. The Bible tells us how we can please God. Read **Hebrews 11:6** and **John 6:27-29**.

Are Christians supposed to work? Of course they work! However, Christians do not make the goal of their life provision and protection. The goal of the Christian is to obey the Holy Spirit. We are salt and light. Our purpose is not to obtain provision and protection. If we do this we end up worshiping self and are filled with pride, prestige, and position. This makes us into idolaters and covetous with the result of living an immoral life. God's purpose for the Christian is to live as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. We are not our own. We are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Colossians 3:23-24**). Do not adopt the mindset of the world around you. Christians have a much different attitude towards life, family, work, and relationships. (**Romans 12:2**).

Romans 8:9-11

Be careful when you read the word "*flesh*" to see what context Paul used it in. When he said "*ye are not in the flesh*" he did not mean someone left their physical body. He did not mean the body was dead and there was a spirit walking around. The "*flesh*" describes the sum total attitude of unbelief and independence from the living God. When he said "*ye are not in the flesh*" he described the man who believed the gospel. When we believe the gospel we are not in the flesh anymore. We are in the Spirit when we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notice he says "if" the Spirit of God dwell in you. Under what circumstances would the Spirit of God not dwell in a man? If a man is not a Christian then the Spirit of God does not dwell in him. If a man does not believe the gospel then the Spirit of God does not live in him. The Holy Spirit lives inside the man who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is summarized by Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

As a Christian our body dies. Our physical bodies die and go back to dust. Our bodies die because of the sin which lives in the physical make up of mankind. However, when a man believes the gospel his spirit comes to life. A man is spirit, soul, and body. This is similar to the tabernacle of outer court, inner court, and most holy place. When we believe in Jesus the Holy Spirit lives in our spirit. Our spirit is made alive. This is what Jesus described as "*born again*". We are born once of our mother in the flesh; we are born the second time by the Holy Spirit.

If Christ is in us our body will die because of sin. It is in the process of death. Even though our body dies we look forward to a future when the Holy Spirit will make our body alive again. Our body will be resurrected in the future. For believers this is called the "*first resurrection*". The second resurrection will be for unbelievers who stand before God's white throne of judgment.

He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal body. The word "quicken" means to resurrect or make alive. The Holy Spirit will resurrect our body like the Lord Jesus was resurrected. The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian and in the future will raise him up from the dead. **1 Corinthians 15:51-54**, "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*"

Romans 8:12-13

The word debtor is another word for slave. A debtor is someone who is a slave to a creditor. We are no longer slaves to the flesh. We do not owe the old man, the flesh, the carnal nature. We are not indebted to live in the manner as the rest of the world system.

Unbelief and a carnal attitude leads to death. This is not just physical death. Death is the darkness of that imploding star I mentioned earlier. Spiritual death is separation from the life which comes from God. Life is what gives meaning, purpose, and structure. Imagine a world without light, without time, without clocks, calendars, purpose, or direction. That is just the beginning of what hell is like. That is

the death which a man who lives in unbelief progresses toward. This is what a life of flesh and carnality leads to.

A life lived in the Spirit is a life of faith in Christ Jesus. A life in the Spirit is believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A life in the Spirit is resting in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. We simply believe the gospel and rest in what the Lord Jesus did for us. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus works in us and through us.

The Holy Spirit enables us to deny the deeds of the body of death. In other words, the Holy Spirit living in us gives us the ability to live contrary to the downward pull of sin. We no longer follow after self-interest as our primary goal. Our primary goal now is seeking the kingdom of God.

We know through God's word that the Lord provides for and protects us. We are not motivated primarily for self in everything. Instead, we want to seek the interests of the Lord. This is the work the Holy Spirit does through us. In this way we mortify the deeds of the body. The body is dedicated to self-preservation, self-provision, and self-worship. When we walk in the Spirit the body is subject to the spirit and mind. We are no longer controlled by the carnal nature but are controlled by truth, righteousness, and holiness. In this way, we live. We truly live when we walk in the Spirit. We truly live now and even more we will live in our resurrected bodies. Read **Proverbs 4:18**.

Romans 8:14

How does a man know if he is led by the Spirit of God? This is important because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. If a man is not led by the Holy Spirit he is not a son of God.

Being a son of God does not imply godhood or equivalence to "the" Son of God Jesus Christ. Christians are not gods with a little "g". I know this is a popular heresy in mega churches. It is heresy. Christians and men in general are not gods. The scripture the false prophets use to justify this heresy are taken out of context. They twist the meaning of the text.

I want to focus on making sure we are led by the Spirit of God. Basically men are led in two different, opposing directions. Let us think a minute what it means for a man not to be led by the Holy Spirit. What does a man follow if he does not follow the Holy Spirit?

A man who does not follow the Holy Spirit relies on himself. He might be a brilliant man with high intelligence and puts his trust in his abilities to navigate the maze of the world system. He does what comes natural. What comes natural to men is to provide for themselves, protect themselves, and prize their own life above the life of others. This is how the natural mind of a man thinks, believes, and behaves. This is the attitude of the world system. This mindset comes directly from Satan who is the original self-worshiper.

Another mark of a man not led by the Holy Spirit is a routine attitude of unbelief. This man does not think about God. If the subject arises he may have a memorized response to it. The response is usually shallow and dismissive. The unbeliever gets his set of memorized responses from the world system.

Consider a man who is led by the Spirit. This man is completely different from the man who has the attitude of the world system. The man led by the Spirit believes the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is at the heart of who he is in life. He believes the gospel. He did not just believe the gospel in the past.

Believing in the gospel is not walking an aisle in a church, or being baptized, or taking communion. Believing the gospel is an every day active momentum toward the Lord Jesus Christ. His heart, mind, and thoughts are intertwined with the word of God.

He probably can remember a definite point in his personal history where he went from unbelief to knowing Jesus Christ was real. For some this transition was dramatic. For others it was not as dramatic but nonetheless definite.

This experience was a turning point. He continues to touch the Lord each day. He believes the gospel every day. He is united with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection every day by faith. He knows God placed him in Christ and the Holy Spirit works out this reality through him.

A man led by the Holy Spirit does not necessarily appear to be spiritual from the outside. You don't see a halo shining around his brow. He does not glow in the dark. He is a simple man, living a practical life, but in his heart he interprets everything through the filter of God's word. He is obsessed with the truth of Jesus Christ. Not a day goes by where his heart is not drawn to thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The man led by the Spirit hears the Lord's voice. A Christian must hear God speaking to him. Scriptures tell us the Lord's sheep hear his voice and follow him. They will not follow a stranger. (**John 10:27**)

Someone led by the Spirit has a spiritual gift he uses to edify and build up others. Paul listed these spiritual gifts. (**Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 12:28**). A man led by the Holy Spirit will have specific character traits which others can see in his life. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**.

It is possible to counterfeit spiritual gifts. It is possible for moral men to imitate the fruits of the Spirit. However, one thing the devil's impostors cannot do: live a life of freedom from self, sin, the world, and the devil. This can only be done by the man who completely rests in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 8:15

The unbeliever is a prisoner to fear. He may not realize this. He might not get up in the morning trembling. He may not go to bed at night afraid. But his life is defined by one single fear: the dread of his own demise. Everything he does is an attempt to put this fact out of his mind. He works all day, enjoys entertainment, fills his life with as much as he can. He does not want to consider the end of his life. All the activity and exertion is so he can deny the truth. His life is brief. It is temporary. As a result he builds a prison for himself. It is a prison of idolatry, unbelief, lies, delusions. This chain gets stronger the longer he persists in the lie.

When a man turns to God and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus these chains are broken. The man who trusts in the Lord Jesus is adopted into God's family. He can cry out to God "*Abba, Father*". This is an emotional phrase of love which a son or daughter cries out to their daddy. Daddy! Father! The prison of fear is gone because he knows he will live forever in God's family. He is no longer running out of time. Instead, he can take time and invest it in what will count in eternity. He invests himself in the kingdom of God. His goal is to promote the name of the Lord Jesus. He does not promote his own name. Instead, he denies himself, he takes up his cross, and he follows Jesus.

Jesus died so we could live. He rose again so that we could join him in his kingdom. A man of God also lays down his life in order that others may be saved by the Lord Jesus.

We are no longer a prisoner. The power of Satan was broken. We no longer follow the lies of the enemy. Instead, we believe the truth in Jesus and are set free. We are free to do what is right and to walk in the light of God's love.

Romans 8:16-17

The Holy Spirit is not an "*it*" as the KJV translators described him. This is one technical detail I always have a hard time with. When I read this verse I change "*itself*" to "*himself*" because the Holy Spirit truly is a person and not an "*it*".

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. He speaks to us in our heart that we belong to God. We were adopted by God and belong to him because of the completed work of Christ Jesus. We can cry out to God "*Abba, Father*", which means Daddy! Father!

If we are God's children we are heirs. An heir is a child who inherits something from his parent. God is our Father and made his children heirs. We will receive a reward and an inheritance. Scripture makes it clear that Christians are destined to receive an inheritance in God's kingdom. However, we need to also be aware that even though we cannot lose our justification (salvation) it is possible to lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. (**1 Corinthians 3:12-15**; **2 Corinthians 5:10**). It is true we cannot undo our justification in Christ Jesus. That was completely accomplished by the Lord Jesus. However, we can diminish our reward. Read **Revelation 3:11**. Keep in mind that no man can take our salvation from us. What is in view is not salvation but rewards for faithfulness. Read **Matthew 25:21**.

Becoming a joint heir with Christ means receiving responsibility. Our reward is the Lord himself and participating in what God planned for eternity. Let us press on to take hold upon all the Lord has prepared for us. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us. Instead, let us look unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. Now is not the time to be lazy or slacking in God's purpose for our lives. Instead, we need to be zealous for the Lord and make the most of every opportunity. Let us redeem the time while we still have time left.

Romans 8:18

There is so much in this excerpt from **Romans 8**. Suffering in this present time is part of the Christian life. Suffering is not everything the Christian life consists of but it is a part. In any doctrine we teach there needs to be an acknowledgment of the fallen world we live in. The Christian life is not abstract. It is lived in a real world with real fallen people. In this world we have tribulation. We experience trouble, suffering, and sorrow. This is the life which we now have in this world we live in.

However, Paul glimpsed the world which is coming. He said that what he glimpsed so far surpasses anything we can imagine that whatever sufferings we endure now are not worthy to be compared. All the pain, suffering, or sorrow of this present world pales in comparison.

Notice how Paul does not speak of heaven or the world to come specifically but instead pointed to something he described as "*the glory which shall be revealed in us*". I think what this points to is our

receiving a resurrected body. When we receive a resurrected body we will be fitted with everything we need to worship and serve God throughout all of eternity.

This glory will be revealed in us. The Lord has put within the believer a glory which shall be revealed in eternity. This is not something that will be created but something which exists within us but is not apparent. It will be revealed in us. Have you ever felt like there was something within you like this? Have you ever sensed a glory of God living in you and through you?

Paul did not ignore the present reality of our human condition but he pointed to a much greater reality and that was the truth of eternity. In light of eternity, what we experience now is only light afflictions. Read **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**.

Romans 8:19-23

The entire creation waits for Christians to receive their resurrected bodies. The entire creation was subjected to vanity because of the sin of man. However, when redeemed men receive their resurrected bodies then creation itself will also be set free. Especially in Bible prophecy describing the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus we can see creation itself set free from the effect of the downward pull of sin. These prophecies of God's kingdom on earth describe animal life acting in accordance to the knowledge of the Lord. Read **Isaiah 11:6-9**.

Creation itself will be delivered from corruption when the children of God are revealed in their resurrected bodies. This demonstrates there is a link between the earth and man. What man did in the Garden of Eden not only affected himself but affected the natural world. I do not think we yet comprehend what we will be able to accomplish under God's direction when we receive our resurrected bodies. I am certainly excited at the thought of being delivered from this body of sin and death. I look forward to receiving a new body which will never grow old, never get sick, and never die.

The Lord redeems our soul but also redeems our body. He justified us, he sanctifies us, and he will glorify us as well. The glory of God will be revealed through believers when they receive a body like the Lord Jesus Christ. In those eternal bodies we will be able to be in God's presence and worship and serve him forever.

This is a great hope to look forward to. No suffering or trouble in this life can compare to what God has in store for us in eternity. Let us put our temporary life here in perspective. We might be discouraged at times but let us never give in to despair. We have a glorious future awaiting us.

Romans 8:24-25

Most of the Christian life is about what will be fulfilled when we receive our resurrection body. Until then we continue to put one foot in front of the next because we live in hope. Paul made a point that a man does not hope for what he already has. A Christian does not already have everything he will have in eternity. Knowing what waits for us we patiently wait. This also works for us and builds in us the character of Christ. The Lord is also patiently waiting for his bride and the fulness of his kingdom on the earth.

The enemy offered the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of the earth. He offered him a shortcut to what he knew the Lord Jesus would eventually inherit from the Father. In a similar manner the enemy can tempt us to lose heart and get our eyes off the hope before us.

This is where patient waiting comes in. We must learn the Christian life is not about instant gratification. Everything in culture urges people to fulfill desires immediately. Instant gratification is constantly promoted. People become impatient if they have to wait a few minutes for something.

A Christian needs to learn patience. This is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit which the Lord wants to bring forth in our lives. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**.

Another word for patience is long suffering. This means we endure the long wait for our resurrected bodies. Do not settle for what the world offers in temporary gratification but instead deny self, take up the cross, and follow Jesus.

There is also a list from the apostle Peter we need to allow the Holy Spirit to build in our lives. **2 Peter 1:6**, "*And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*" Patience is necessary in order for us to become perfect and entire wanting nothing. (**James 1:4**).

We can never become a complete Christian unless we are patient. Look up the word "wait" in the Bible. A lot of life consists in waiting on the Lord for answers to prayers, for instruction, and to be led by the Holy Spirit. An impatient man like King Saul forced himself and did not trust the Lord. A man of faith receives grace to wait patiently for God's answer. Read the exhortation from **Hebrews 12:1**.

Romans 8:26-27

The Holy Spirit is a helper who comes alongside the Christian to teach, instruct, guide, and to pray through us. It may sound odd that the Holy Spirit can pray through a Christian. I won't try to explain it, either, because it is not something which can be understood intellectually but rather through experience. Some things in the Christian life must be experienced to be understood.

He helps us because we are weak. We live in weak bodies and many times do not know how we should pray. We do not know how we ought to pray for people, situations, or problems. We can always say, "*Lord, your will be done in this person's life, in this situation, with this problem.*" However, there are times the Holy Spirit prays through us. The situation may be too heavy to put into words. We might be so burdened we cannot speak but even through groaning the Spirit prays through us.

The Holy Spirit knows what needs to be done. When we yield completely to the Lord the Spirit of God intercedes through us. He makes intercession for us according to God's will.

Remember **Proverbs 3:5**, "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*" There is a time when we pray according to our understanding but there is another time when we do not know how to pray. The Lord intercedes for us and through us. At present the Lord intercedes for us. The Bible says he lives to make intercession for us. (**Hebrews 7:25**). Let us yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He lives in us and he is able to pray and intercede when we are at the end of our understanding. He prays through us when we can not utter words but only groan in the spirit. Read **John 11:33-34**.

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:28 is a precious verse in the Bible to me. I don't know when I learned this verse but it was early in my life. I read the verse and understood it and knew I had to memorize it. This is one of those Bible verses every Christian needs to memorize. I think we should memorize this verse and meditate on it every day. There is comfort and encouragement in this verse. This one verse is like a cannon ball which can dismantle the lies of the devil.

Let's think about what this verse means. We know! We know. There is no guessing. There is an absolute truth which we can depend on. As surely as the sun rises and sets, as surely as there is a moon, a sun, and stars. As surely as there is air to breathe, deserts, mountains, rivers, and an ocean. We know. God does not hide the truth from us. He revealed the truth to us in his Son Jesus Christ.

We know all things work together for good for them who love God. Every good decision, every bad decision, every success, every failure, every advance movement, every retreat in life. Every single thing in life is material God uses. He takes all things and works it together for my good!

The Christian cannot lose. No matter what the world says, no matter how many accusations the devil levels against us, no matter how hard life is, we can never lose. God takes everything in our life and uses it. Like a potter works the clay every bit of the dirt in our life is taken and transformed by God into something good.

I do not have to regret my past. I do not need to wish that I had done this or that in the past. God is able right now to take every detail and work it together for good. This is how much God loves me. God is my creator, he is my maker, and every detail of my life is in his hands.

He knows me when I get up in the morning, and he knows me when I go to bed at night. He knows the thoughts that I think and the words I speak. Before a word is on my tongue he already knows it completely. He has beset me behind and before and has laid his hand upon me. My life is completely in the hands of God almighty. Read **Psalms 139**.

God is determined that no matter how bad I messed up he will turn it around for good in the end. The end product of my life is what God has in mind. He sees the blueprint of my life, and there is absolutely nothing I can do to thwart the piece of art he is creating.

My heart's desire is to believe God, to work with him, and to cooperate with him. One way or another he will have his way. I am happy about this. I am content with God's dealing in my life. Because I know he loves me and he will only do what is good for me.

He has a purpose for my life. He is carrying out this purpose. He has called me according to his own purpose. (**2 Timothy 1:9**). You see that? God had a plan for me before the world was created. He knows every bird that falls from the sky. He has clothed the grass of the field. He knows me. (**Job 23:10**).

I can rest in him today. I know he has a good plan for my life. His plan is good and not evil. His plan is to give me a future and hope. (**Jeremiah 29:11**). I am confident that the good work he started in me will be carried on until he completes it on the day he returns. (**Philippians 1:6**).

What rest, what peace, what joy I have today by believing this promise in God's word. My heart rejoices in God my savior! The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. (**Nahum 1:7**).

I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord is at work. My life is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have nothing to be afraid of. The Lord will complete his work in me. He will carry it on to completion. I have hope for the future and I have no regrets about the past. My past is under the blood of Jesus Christ. I am forgiven, I am redeemed, and I will live forever with the Lord.

Romans 8:29-30

God knew everything before it happened. He knew who would believe in him. God chose those whom he foreknew would believe in him. I like the attitude of the Psalmist in **Psalms 131:1**, "*LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*"

There are two thoughts surrounding the "*conformed to the image of his Son*", and also "*firstborn among many brethren*".

God's ultimate purpose for believers is that we be conformed to the image of his son Jesus Christ. We see this clearly in **Romans 8:29**. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is God's purpose for us. When we understand this and use the knowledge of this to interpret what happens in our life we will have peace. We will be encouraged even if hardship comes because we understand through faith in God's word that our Father is conforming us to the image of his Son Jesus.

With this knowledge we are equipped to withstand temptation, endure trials, and to have a proper perspective on relationships. Just this one Bible principle of knowing God's purpose can radically change our goals in life. It will give us courage and enable us to be bold in the face of the enemy. It delivers us from fear. We can proclaim with Daniel's three friends that even if God does not deliver us we will not bow to the false god of this world. We maintain our present course because God is at work in our lives to conform us to the image of his Son.

This is God's purpose and it is his plan. When we keep this in our mind it helps us interpret life with a biblical framework of thinking. We will not be self-centered but instead Christ-centered in our decisions.

Let's think about this: *firstborn among many brethren*. What does that mean? Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. He was the first of many brethren to receive a resurrection body. Christians are brothers of the Lord. We are his spiritual family. This is what he told his disciples during his earthly ministry. He elevated his spiritual family above his physical relatives. He said those who obeyed God were his real family. They are his real family because they will be with him forever.

Father God will have many brothers for his son the Lord Jesus. This work is going on today. Every time someone hears the gospel and believes he becomes one of these many brothers. Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 8:31

What can we say in light of the facts the Holy Spirit gave us in this chapter? God is working all things together for the good of those who love him. God has called us by his own purpose and grace and takes everything in our lives to bring us where we need to get to. His purpose is for us to be conformed to the image of his firstborn Son Jesus Christ.

What is our reply? We should be bold and proclaim that since God is for us then nobody can be against us. There is no power in hell that can prevail against us. There is no one who can defeat the Christian who stands firmly on the completed work of Jesus Christ. We were forgiven, saved, delivered, sanctified, justified, and look forward to being glorified. The enemy cannot stop this from happening. The more he fights the more he helps accelerate the process of our sanctification. There is nothing the enemy can do to separate us from God's love. We are completely secure in Christ.

When a boy has a big brother on the playground he is more confident to move around without fear. He knows his big brother has his back. The bully on the playground will not succeed against him as long as his big brother is there. And scripture says the Lord will never leave us and or forsake us. The Lord Jesus is our big brother. He is the firstborn among many brothers.

Praise God we have the victory. We are not defeated. Allow faith to reach out and grab the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have anything to be afraid of. We are secure in the Lord. He is our provider. He is our protector. He is our portion forever.

Romans 8:32

The Holy Spirit asks the believer reading this verse a question. He asks why we do not believe God will freely give us all things. Why do we think God will not give us all things? He already gave his best. He provided his Son for our salvation. He gave us his best. Why wouldn't he also give us everything else we need?

This is the problem with unbelief. It does not make sense. It is not rational to not believe in a loving God who gives everything we need. Look around at what he created. Look at this beautiful world. Though it is a fallen creation which we live in it is still amazing. There is beauty for the eyes to see, beauty for the ears to hear. When God created the earth he said it was good.

After pondering this question of unbelief I've come to understand that unbelief is man's default attitude. We come into the world as enemies of God. This is part of who we are as humans. When man fell in the Garden of Eden he made an agreement with the liar and his lie. We've been turning our back on God ever since.

The Lord did not give up on us. He did not turn his back on us. He constantly creates situations to turn our heart back to him. He works all things together for our good and his glory.

God did not spare any expense in bringing us back to himself. He gave himself through his son Jesus Christ. The Lord sacrificed himself so that we could be saved, delivered, redeemed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and glorified. God gave himself. He poured out his life for us. Why would we ever entertain the thought that he won't help us, or provide for us, or protect us?

Israel, in the wilderness, did not believe God would provide for them. They saw God part the Red Sea. They saw the miracles in Egypt. They saw how God brought them out of slavery and into freedom. But they still could not believe he would give them food and water in the desert. Men do not change in this respect. Unbelief is at the heart of our problems.

Our work is to believe in the Son of God. When we believe the gospel and rest completely in the finished work of Christ then we are set free from fear, anxiety, and worry. The Lord is our provider. **Philippians 4:19**, *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

Romans 8:33-39

No one can condemn someone God justified. God declared us not guilty because of what the Son of God accomplished through crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. God placed us into Christ and counted what Christ accomplished for us. We have received the righteousness of Christ and he took our sin upon himself. No one can condemn us now.

The Lord Jesus continues to intercede for us. He prays for us. I can't really understand what that means but there it is. He intercedes for us.

Nothing can separate us from God's love. There is no tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword which can separate us from God's love. Do we know this? We might know it intellectually but it is another thing altogether to experience this. I can't say I have experienced everything Paul listed here but I get a glimpse of this. I've seen God's love in my life. I've seen God's faithfulness in my life. I am persuaded that nothing will separate me from God's love.

There is nothing in the natural or spiritual world that can separate us from God. His love is eternal. He is our refuge, our fortress, and our strong tower. He is our shield, our defense, our lawyer. He is everything we need to live and overcome.

I am thankful for the encouragement and comfort of Romans chapter 8. There is hardly another chapter which can compare to the height and depth of encouragement we find in this chapter. Remember to store up these promises in your heart. Memorize this chapter and use it when you need it. As you walk with the Lord you will need these promises. You will need it to endure temptations, trials, and all the attack of the enemy. Don't give up and don't be discouraged. God will never leave you or forsake you. He will be with us to the end.

Romans Chapter 9

Romans 9:1-5

There is more here than Paul's compassion for Jewish people. We see the heart of God and the heart of the Lord Jesus. Notice the depth of Paul's intercessory passion. This intense intercession does not come from the heart of man but is born out of the heart of God. Moses said something similar to God when he interceded on behalf of Israel. He asked God to blot him out of the book of life. In a sense this was what happened when Jesus went to Calvary. He himself became sin for us. He took upon himself the penalty of sin when he died on the cross.

God's love for Israel is intense. Paul described this love as a "*great heaviness and continual sorrow*". I believe Paul wrote the book of Hebrews out of this great heaviness and continual sorrow for his fellow Jewish brethren. Paul called Israelites "*my brethren*". We should remember the Lord Jesus called Jewish people his brethren. I think it is a serious sin when Christians turn their back on Israel or follow doctrines which are dismissive towards Jewish people. We should guard our heart against any doctrine which attempts to plant seeds of hatred towards Israel. This spirit comes from Satan and is inspired in the pit of hell.

The Lord Jesus came into the world in the flesh through Israel. Paul said Jesus the Messiah was a Jew. Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria that salvation is of the Jews.

A Christian should pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the salvation of Israel. We should always seek to bless Jewish people and bless the nation of Israel. These are the people who received God's word and who preserved God's word. This nation demonstrates God's glory in the earth. This nation is God's prophetic timepiece in the world.

Romans 9:6-13

Paul made a distinction between the physical seed of Abraham and the spiritual seed of Abraham. Some people think the church replaced national Israel. This is impossible because the church is not an earthly nation with earthly land inheritance. What Paul pointed to was the difference between the brother of the spirit and the brother of the flesh. One was the children of the flesh, the other was the children of the promise. Those who believe God's promise in regard to the "Seed" are the children of promise. These are the spiritual brothers. Those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, the promised Seed foreshadowed by Isaac and Jacob in Paul's teaching are the children of promise. Be clear in your mind that there was always within Israel and within the outward church today those who are children of the promise. There were always those who were of the faith of Abraham and believed the Promise made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That promise was about the Seed who would crush the head of the devil. This Seed promise pointed directly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who believe the gospel (which always existed from the beginning and even before the beginning of creation) are the children of the promise. The children of the promise are overcomers, the remnant, and the bride of Christ. They are those who exist within the outward structure of Israel and now also exist in the outward structure of what people think of as the "church". They are true believers, the spiritual brother, the overcomer, the remnant.

They were not all Israel which were in Israel. This is true today of what people call the "church". They are not all the church who are the church. There is a spiritual brother and there is a brother of the flesh. Many people confess the Lord Jesus but not many people live for him, by him, and walk in him by faith. Those who do are remnant overcomers, the bride, the children of the promise.

When he said "*in Isaac shall thy seed be called*" he pointed to the reality of the spiritual child of God. Jesus said, "*You must be born again.*" Those who are born of the Spirit are those who believe the promise of God regarding his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. These believers existed in Israel before Christ appeared as a babe in a manger. They existed throughout his life. They existed during his earthly ministry. They were there when he was crucified, when he died, when he was buried, and when he rose from the dead. They were there since he ascended to heaven. These children of promise always were and they always will be. They were, they are, and they shall be. They reflect who God is: who was, and

is, and is to come: the great Three In One. God's people are three in one, also. They are Israel, church, and the kingdom.

God revealed himself to me as God who is three in one. He is prophet, priest, and king. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and the nations. In three days (Israel, church, and the kingdom) all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Look at the pattern of the spiritual brother and the brother of the flesh in the Bible. It is the same pattern you see in the New Testament with parables such as the wise and foolish virgins and in verses where one is taken and one is left. This is a pattern which begins in Genesis with Adam and Eve's two sons Cain and Abel. You see this in Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Jacob's sons versus Joseph, Saul and David, over and over. It is even in examples like Mary and Martha in the gospels. One rested, one worked. This pattern is repeated. It is prophetic of the outward and inward structure of the house of faith throughout time and history.

Romans 9:14-21

It is easy to read this and miss the simple point I think Paul made. God is free. God is free to do whatever he deems is righteous. God is always right, always holy, always perfect in everything he does. God is a real person who makes decisions, choices, and creates everything for us, including us. He is the ultimate Potter over pieces of clay. How can we, then, the clay in his hands, question the Potter? We might question but God is not obligated to explain what he does. How can we understand what he does?

God asked similar questions to Job. Who made the universe? Who made the stars, the sun, the moon, the light, the darkness, the earth, and who made man in his own image?

We need to understand who we are. We are the clay. He is the potter. God is free even if he crush us. If we stumble in our faith it is only because we did not believe in the true God but only in who we thought he was. God is free even if he crush us. This is the lesson of Job. It is the lesson of the Potter and the clay. God can crush us because he is free. When God does something it is always right because He is God.

Men question why one person is saved and another person is damned. Men question the justice of God. Those who question God like this don't really know him. To know God in truth is to be quiet, it is to be humble, it is in trust in his righteousness, his justice, his mercy, his truth. There is no question from the clay when he knows he is clay and God is the Potter. Read **Psalms 100:1-5**.

Romans 9:22-23

When I read these verses what stands out to me is the "what if" statement in this sentence.

What if God? This is a question; it is not a statement. The Holy Spirit asks the reader to consider a question.

The question is this: what if God, with the purpose of demonstrating his wrath and his power, endured with patience vessels designed for destruction.

What if some people enter this world for the purpose of God demonstrating his anger and wrath. The question continues to cover the opposite scenario as well. What if he also made some vessels destined for his mercy in order to glorify his grace and mercy.

What if? We know this is a contrast of extremes because scripture plainly declares in other passages in the Bible that it is not God's will for any man to perish.

Some people read these verses and say God creates some people to go to hell and creates some people to go to heaven. But that is not exactly what the verses say! What does it say? The verse asks a question. It does not make a declarative statement about what God did. No, it asks a question!

The question uses an example of extreme contrasts in order to make a point about God. God is free! God is much higher than man's logic and reason. His ways are much higher than our ways. His plans and thoughts and goals are beyond human comprehension. Read **Isaiah 55:8-9**.

We are encouraged to consider that we are clay and God is the potter. He is our creator. We cannot comprehend the methods and strategies of the Creator. We should never take the position that we are capable of calling God's justice and mercy into question. The Lord is always righteous, just, holy, and pure in everything he does and says. His love endures forever.

Remember we are addressing God's justice in allowing Gentiles to be grafted into the tree of Israel's election. We are not dealing with a man-made system of Bible philosophy. We are instead dealing with the Lord, and not a doctrine about the Lord. It is difficult for some to read the Bible text rather than reading a man-made system of thinking into the Bible text. Let us deal with what the Bible says and not with what we think it says.

We are vessels in God's hands. We are his instruments. I often consider the fact believers are the body of Christ. We are his hands and his feet on the earth. We serve God's purpose in the earth and bring glory and honor to his name by believing his word and abiding in the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

Romans 9:24-26

Remember, much of Romans drives home the truth that in the church there is no separation between Jews and Gentiles. There is an objection to God's justice in the minds of Jews and Gentiles. Paul's answer to the question of God's justice is simple. God is God. You are not. He reiterated the truth that God grafted Gentiles into the tree of God's people through faith in the Jewish Messiah Jesus Christ. He proved this by quoting Old Testament Jewish prophets.

We see that going back to God's promises to Abraham God's purpose was bigger than the nation of Israel. This did not mean the church replaced national Israel. There are distinct sets of promises God makes. One set of promises he made to national Israel. A different set of promises were given to believers within national Israel and to Gentiles who believe God's promise of the Seed (Messiah, Christ, King). This Messiah destroyed the work and kingdom of Satan.

Paul's quotations in these verses point to the fact that it was God's plan to include Gentiles who would believe the gospel message.

The prophets in the Old Testament did not clearly see that Jewish people and Gentiles would comprise a new structure we know as the church. This was a mystery revealed to the Apostle Paul to teach through the letters he wrote the churches.

The prophets did see God's plan included more than just national Israel. As I said, God's creation of the church did not cancel out his previous arrangement with national Israel. It might be difficult, at times, to keep all this clear.

Here is how God showed it to me. God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He revealed himself in the roles of prophet, priest, and king.

In the same way God's people reflect who God is. They are Israel, church, and the nations. These three dispensations can also be called "days". There are three days in God's revelation of himself in time and space. He is God three in one. There are only one people of God but they are revealed in time-space through Israel, through the church, and also soon through the kingdom age of King Jesus. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus comprise the church today. God is primarily at this present time revealing himself to the world through the church. He is also still speaking through the existence of national Israel.

He will in the future reveal himself through people who will believe in King Jesus during the millennium. This millennium is the thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

All three groups are one people of God. God is three in one. God's people are three in one.

There are three days in God's revelation of himself in time-space. At the end of these three days God completes everything in the New Jerusalem. That will be the completion of the universe in its present form.

A lot to take in. Praise God he revealed these things to simple, humble men and women who pray for wisdom and understanding. Thank you Jesus!

Romans 9:27-29

Paul quoted the prophets concerning the Gentiles and so now he quoted the prophets concerning Israel. He quoted Isaiah to make a point about a "remnant". He described a "seed" which the Lord left upon the earth.

When we see how Paul interpreted and applied Old Testament scripture we get an idea of how we can handle scripture. Paul saw patterns in prophecy. He saw prophetic patterns in scripture.

The nation of Israel was huge but there was only a few people within the outward structure who were true believers. This remnant held the promise of God concerning Messiah, the seed of the woman.

This is true of the church also. Many people profess faith in the Lord within the outward church. However, there are few true believers in Jesus. Many are called. Few are chosen.

When Paul quoted Isaiah "*except the Lord of Sabbath had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom*" he meant unless there existed a remnant the nation would have disappeared. But God has a plan for Israel

and so there was always a remnant of Jewish people in the world. There would be no Israel if there were not a remnant. There would be no real church, also, without a remnant abiding in the outward structure of what men call the church.

The remnant represents overcomers who press on to know the Lord in their daily lives. They go beyond forgiveness of sins and experience victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. This is the bride of Christ who is without spot or blemish. These are people who fear the Lord and depart from iniquity. They are not satisfied until God makes them holy, pure, and without any blame. They press on to know the Lord in everything he accomplished at Calvary.

God has a remnant who do not bow the knee to the false gods of current society and culture. Just like in the days of Elijah the Lord sets apart for himself a group of believers who walk in humility and in the fear of the Lord.

Let us pray we may be a part of this group of overcoming believers who walk in the Spirit and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

Romans 9:30-33

If we read these verses we understand the difference between saving faith in the Lord and all other religions in the world. This is the one distinct difference which makes a Christian different from everyone else in the world.

The mistake people made in Israel was the belief that adherence to a written code of rules would purchase them righteousness from God. However, the law itself did not impart righteousness to men. It only showed men how sinful they were and how deserving they were of God's wrath and justice.

However, there is a righteousness apart from the law which God gave as a free gift when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This righteousness through faith was given to everyone from Adam and Eve all the way to the present and into the future. The gospel of the Messiah, the promise of the Seed, existed from the beginning. Actually, it existed before the beginning and in eternity in the heart and mind of God. The gospel is the message that God justifies us, not based upon our performance or adherence to his rules, but based upon his promise of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe in our heart that Jesus died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day, and when we confess this faith with our mouth we are saved. It is that simple. We believe and we confess. This is the basis upon which we enter eternal life with God.

However, religious people stumble over this. Paul quoted from the Old Testament again about this stumbling stone which he applied to the Lord Jesus. The religious people in the days of Jesus earthly ministry stumbled over him. They could not comprehend that they could become right with God by believing the word of this nobody prophet from Nazareth. He offended them. He offended their prestige, their positions, their titles.

He does the same today. He is still a stumbling stone for those who seek to find their own version of righteousness. Men always seek to justify themselves. Today they call this self-improvement or use modern terms, but it is the same thing. Men still assert their own self-righteousness instead of relying on the righteousness of Jesus.

How can you know if you are relying on self-righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ? One easy way to see this is to notice every time you feel like you must defend yourself. Notice every single time you attempt to assert that you are right and other people are wrong. Self-assertiveness is a sign of a person relying upon their own self-righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ. Pride is also the biggest symptom of self-righteousness. Pride can be seen in those who embrace self-love, self-image, and who talk about loving their own self. This is the propaganda of the world system, which is based upon self-worship. Self-worship is devil worship, by the way.

Let us deny self. Let us repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Let us repent of our own self-righteousness. Instead, let us look to Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Romans Chapter 10

Romans 10:1-4

We see God's heart for Israel revealed through Paul's expression of his heart's desire. If Paul prayed for Israel then we should pray for Israel. All scripture is given by inspiration from God. Paul's heart of compassion for Israel reflects the heart of God. Since this is God's heart for Israel then we should have the same attitude. Christians should pray for Israel and seek the salvation of Israel. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

National Israel had a zeal for God. Paul testified that he persecuted Christians in religious zeal. This zeal was not based on knowledge. The enemy loves when people are zealous for religion with no true knowledge of the gospel of God. Religious zealots are hard to reach with the gospel, but apparently it was not impossible because the Lord reached Saul. He turned Saul into the apostle Paul.

Establishing our righteousness means we build our own self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is based upon what we can do or what we have done. It always leads to an attitude of pride. The pride of life can be subtle. People have a caricature in their mind of pride. They see a man with his nose turned up in the air. But this is not accurate. Pride is not only thinking highly of one's self. It is also an attitude of independence. It is self-worship. It is self-reliance. It is an attitude of putting one's self first. As Paul said in **Philippians 2:21**, *"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."*

In religion the purpose of self-righteousness is to exalt one's self over others through attainment of positions, titles, or prestige. People who walk in the pride of life and self-righteousness rely on their title or position for authority and influence. In reality, titles and positions do not give men real authority. Real authority is persuading others to serve Christ from a motive of love and humility. Jesus taught his disciples about this when he commanded them not to call one another rabbi, father, or master (all of which people do today, proving they operate according to the world system and not the Holy Spirit).

The righteousness of God is Jesus himself. God gives us this righteousness when we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is outlined in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** and summarized as Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen again on the third day. How often do you hear this message from the pulpit?

Christ is the end of the law for those who believe. We do not relate to God through the law of God but through Christ Jesus. God does not give us a moral code; he gives us himself. We do not follow a moral code; we live our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit as we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:5-13

Let's focus on this last part "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*".

It is hard for me to agree to any theological system which promotes the concept that God's forgiveness is only for a select chosen labeled "elect". I see where people get the idea. Once this system is firmly planted in someone's mind everything in scripture is interpreted according to that system. That is where religious systematic theology becomes dangerous. It is dangerous because by saying God only saves a limited few souls we put God in a box. However, anyone with enough time and determination can build an opposing system of theology which unhinges this idea that God only saves some people. These verses provide us with just one proof text we could use to do that.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This does not allow us to create a closed system of theology that God is only interested in saving one group of men who were predestined to salvation. Whosoever! That is a good word to remember.

I'm not against taking what is good from theology systems but I am against allowing these systems to completely color my perception of who God is. We need to be careful to have a biblical framework of thinking and not a man-made systematic framework of thinking. The difference might seem like I'm splitting hairs, but it does make a great deal of difference. It is the difference between the "*letter that killeth and the Spirit who giveth life*". It is the difference between being a religious Pharisee or a humble follower of Jesus.

We don't know everything. We should not pretend we know everything when creating religious systems which exclude a plain interpretation of the Bible.

By assigning man-made values to religious words it is possible to completely change the meaning of the gospel, Jesus, and even who God is. This is how cults thrive. They take from Christianity and change it into half-truths and complete lies.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If a man believes in his heart that Jesus rose from the dead and confesses with his mouth this faith then he is saved.

Paul continued to drive home the point that anyone can be saved and it did not matter if the man was a Jew or a Gentile. Paul was the leader in the early church promoting this message of including everyone in hearing the gospel. The gospel was preached to every person in the world. No one was excluded from knowing who God is. His arms are open to every person. All a man has to do is call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 10:14-15

We have a series of questions to inspire us about the process involved in getting people saved. How did this work? People were saved when they heard the gospel. In order to be saved a man must hear the

gospel. Someone took the message and delivered it. Today we have various ways we can share, preach, proclaim, and communicate the gospel all over the world.

We are all called by God as Christians to be sent with the message. Every Christian is sent where he is at in life as a messenger of the gospel. We are called to let others around us know the gospel. The Lord sets aside certain men to do this full-time. We should all pray whether or not God wants us to work in this kind of "full time" ministry. However, do not think because you are not on the mission field in a foreign country that you are not in full time ministry. Even if you are not receiving financial support to preach the gospel you and I still have an obligation to tell others about Jesus.

How can they call on the Lord Jesus if they have never heard of him? It is hard to believe in today's world that anyone would not have heard about the Lord Jesus, but I suppose it is possible. Let us pray that if there is any group of people who have never heard of Jesus that God will send someone to them. Ask the Lord if you might be the person God wants to send.

How can they believe unless they hear the gospel? Someone needs to tell them. God has not sent angels with the gospel in this current time but he sent men to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How can men go to the ends of the earth to preach unless they are sent? This is a good question. This question is answered many times by churches forming organizations to raise money financially for individuals who are called to go out to the ends of the earth. There are many missionary organizations today that support men and women in the field.

It is the greatest privilege in the world to be used by God to communicate the gospel message. Let us ponder and meditate upon the gospel every day so that when we do have an opportunity to share with someone then it will be right there on our lips. The word will come out of us like a sword and pierce the heart of the unbeliever.

Romans 10:16-21

During his earthly ministry several times the Lord Jesus pointed out how great faith a Gentile person had in comparison with the lack of faith Israel had. He pointed this out in the account of the centurion and also the Gentile woman whose daughter was demon possessed. He drew attention to the great faith Gentile people had in contrast to the lack of faith Israel and his own disciples had.

The Lord has people who believe in him from every tribe, clan, family, tongue, and nation. The Lord calls people from all over the world to believe in him and to be saved through faith in his son Jesus Christ. God gave a witness of himself to anyone who wants to know him. If anyone has a desire to know the truth the Lord will reveal himself to them.

Saving faith comes when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. When we continue in God's word our faith will continue to grow and we will see life around us through the framework of the truth which is God's word.

Not everyone hears God's word believes or obeys. Some people who are determined to live according to their own self-righteousness can hear God's word but it does not produce saving faith in their heart. Instead they are disobedient and go their own way. The Lord stands all day long with his hands outstretched to these people but they will not come to him. They would rather hold onto the rags of

their self-righteousness. Their pride and position in this life means more to them than being with the Lord forever in eternity.

No one can say they did not know the Lord Jesus, including Israel. Moses and the prophets pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah, and also prophesied that Israel as a nation would reject their Messiah when he came. Just like Joseph's brothers rejected him but later received him when they bowed their knee to him, so also the Jews rejected their Messiah the first time but when he returns the second time they will bow their knee and call him Lord.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God". I take this literally and apply this to my life. I've noticed that when I stay in God's word my faith grows stronger, but when I neglect God's word I become weaker in my faith. God's word keeps us from sin, or if we let it, sin will keep us from God's word. Let us feed our heart and mind upon the truth in God's word. Let us not allow a single day to go by that we do not read, study, and meditate upon the word of God. It is our daily bread we need to stay spiritually strong and healthy.

Romans Chapter 11

Romans 11:1-5

The nation of Israel is part of God's plan and a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The point Paul made was that God still has a plan for Israel. His plan was for Israel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. He is their Messiah.

Paul came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and he was a Jew. Paul said God did not turn his back on Jews because Paul was a Jew who came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's plan is for Jews and Gentiles both to believe in the Messiah and together form the church. This does not mean the church replaces national Israel. There are distinct promises and an everlasting covenant which God made with national Israel that will be fulfilled.

As Paul taught us in the letter to the Romans believers in the Messiah have a relationship with God based on God's grace. Our relationship with God is not based on adherence to the law of Moses. Our relationship with God is based on grace demonstrated through Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Believers within Israel were a minority and were a remnant. This remnant can be seen throughout scripture. There was only a remnant who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile of Israel. This remnant rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. These were true believers in God. There was also a remnant in Israel during the time of Elijah as Paul pointed out in these verses.

The Lord has a remnant of overcoming believers in the Messiah. These are men and women who believe God's promise of the Seed who crushed the head of the serpent. These are believers who look to the Messiah. God's Messiah is the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the prophecies in the Old Testament of the Messiah who gave his life as a lamb for the sins of Israel and for the entire world. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Those who look to Jesus are the grace remnant. They live because of God's free gift given through the Lord Jesus Christ. God provided forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, the world, and the devil. His provision was the God-Man, the Son of God, and God the Son Jesus Christ.

Romans 11:6

This verse makes it clear we cannot relate to God on the basis of works and on the basis of grace at the same time. If it is grace then it is no more works. If we try to mix grace and works then we no longer have grace. If it is works then it is no more grace. If it is grace it is no more works. Paul made it clear that we cannot have both. This is a serious problem for people in the church.

It is a serious problem because when we relate to God on the wrong basis we fail, become discouraged, and do not experience victory. We continue to be slaves to sin and live in fear and unbelief.

The only hope of experiencing victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil is through God's grace. We must rely completely on the grace of God in order to walk in the Spirit and live as an overcomer. There can be no victory in the life of the Christian who relies upon his performance or good works.

Grace and works affect everything in our lives and not just how sins are forgiven. Some people believe that if they do more good than bad then the good will outweigh their sins. This is not what the Bible teaches. This idea is a man-made model or system of performance based religion. This is how all religions with the exception of Christianity operate. There are a lot of Christian based cults who also operate like this. One of the biggest cults that teach this is the Catholic religion.

When we read the letter of James it seems to contradict the gospel of grace which Paul preached. The way to put this in perspective is to understand what the author aimed to accomplish. James was not outlining salvation. Instead, he described what someone who had saving faith through God's grace looked like. There were impostors in the church who claimed to be Christians but James said we could tell they were not because of their lifestyle. The letters of John also point this out.

What Paul wrote had to do with how a man is saved and the difference between true faith and works-based Judaism. Paul spent time in his ministry showing the difference between faith in the Messiah and the man-made system of Judaism which existed at that time.

The principles Paul taught help us understand the difference between a real relationship with God based on God's grace and the man-made systems of works-based religion that exist throughout the world.

A Christian is not a follower of another religion. This is a fundamental difference between a true Christian and all people who believe in man-made systems of philosophy or religion. Christianity is not about following a moral code, or self-improvement, or about how to succeed in this world. True Christianity teaches us how to have a relationship with God based on what Jesus accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection. This is the gospel of God's grace. Everything a Christian is and becomes is based on God's grace and has nothing to do with any efforts we make to change our life.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

Works-based systems glorify man and lead to boasting of what one can accomplish, how one has evolved, changed, or become a better person. All the credit goes to the person who worked their program or system. This is the exact opposite of what it means to be a Christian. This is why I abhor systems such as AA and 12-step programs. This is man-made religion boiled down its basics so that no one is offended by a religious aroma but it is in reality extremely religious and is spiritual poison to those who submit themselves to it.

It is by grace we are saved. If a man's life is changed by God's grace then he will know that it was nothing he did. He did not take credit for any change in his life. Instead, he gave all the honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by grace we were forgiven, saved, delivered, sanctified, and will one day be glorified with a new resurrection body.

Romans 11:7-11

"Through their fall" points directly to the rejection of the Messiah by Israel's leaders. Jesus came to his own but his own did not receive him. (**John 1:11**). By rejecting their Messiah Israel as a whole became blind. When anyone rejects light all they have left is darkness. Rejecting truth leaves a man with lies. This is what Judaism became after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It became something completely different than what it was before the temple was destroyed.

Does this mean the church replaced Israel? The church did not replace Israel. God has a specific set of promises in an everlasting covenant which he made to national Israel. This covenant included a land covenant with specific boundaries. These promises will be fulfilled in the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ on this earth.

The rejection by Israel of their Messiah provided an opportunity for those outside Israel to hear of Israel's Messiah. The gospel did not stay in Jerusalem and Israel. As Jesus said it would the gospel traveled from Jerusalem, to Judaea, to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Paul said the salvation of Gentiles by Israel's Messiah provoked Israel to jealousy. This is exactly what we see happening throughout the ministry of Paul. His chief opponents were Jewish religious people. They were the ones who created trouble for him everywhere.

People who hate Jews use this as an excuse to stir up trouble for them over the past 2,000 years. This is a tragedy, because Jewish people are beloved of God. Satan hates them because they are the people God used to write the Bible, including the New Testament, and to preserve it for us. Jesus himself came into this world a Jew!

It is irrational for a Christian to think he replaced the Jewish people. There are true believers (Christians) within Israel who believe in Jesus. There is a remnant of Jewish people today who believe in Jesus. There were always Jewish people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the remnant within Israel and it is the remnant today which exists within the outward structure of what men call the "church".

Not everyone in the church believe in Jesus. There are people in the church who put faith in faith, or who put faith in self-improvement, or stand in church foyers making business contacts.

Not everyone who is in the church are Christian brothers. There are many wolves and tares sitting in pews of churches. They stand behind the pulpit moralizing or teaching people the principles of self-worship.

Gentile salvation was in God's mind from the beginning. God told Abraham he would be a blessing to many nations. He would be a father to many nations. Those who believe the promise of the Seed of the Woman, who put their faith in Jesus, are grafted into God's household. This house began with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Romans 11:12-15

This "*fall*" and "*casting away*" are temporary conditions. Notice how he asked the question "*how much more their fulness*" and "*life from the dead*"? Something that appeared to be dead will be raised to life. Something that was temporarily fallen or cast away is restored and made full and complete. What was Paul talking about here?

God is not finished with Israel. The church did not replace Israel. Instead, the Gentiles who believe in Jesus were grafted into an olive tree which is Israel. The church is Gentile and Jewish believers in the Messiah. Also, God's promises to national Israel will be fulfilled. All Israel as a nation will one day be saved when Jesus returns.

Paul made an interesting revelation concerning his personal ministry which he received from the Lord. Paul described himself as an apostle of the Gentiles. Peter and the apostles who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry were primarily apostles to Jewish people. Paul was different. However, though he was an apostle to Gentiles he loved his countrymen and prayed for their salvation. This is why Paul never signed the book of Hebrews. He was an apostle to the Gentiles and the letter to the Hebrews was Paul's letter to Jewish Christians.

The fulfillment of God's promises to Israel was compared to "*life from the dead*". This should trigger something in the mind of a biblical Christian. Who was raised from the dead? Jesus! The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. When was he raised from the dead? On the third day.

In a similar fashion when Jesus returns the second time there will be another resurrection on a third day. It will be the third day of God's dealing with mankind when Jesus returns to set up his thousand year kingdom. On that day Israel will be raised up and will be complete.

Romans 11:16-22

We can identify the qualities which caused Israel to miss out on their Messiah: being highminded and unbelieving. Paul warned Gentile believers not to be highminded, but believe, and to continue in the goodness of God.

How does one continue in God's goodness? Through humility and by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the symptoms of pride is moving away from the simplicity of the gospel. Men move away from the gospel of Jesus Christ because of human pride. They move towards psychology and human philosophy the more pride takes root. Unbelief produces pride and pride results in drifting away from the gospel. Going away from the gospel cuts off a man from God's goodness, because all of God's

goodness is wrapped up in the Son of God. There is no other way to abide in God except through the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of the olive tree. When teaching his disciples he used a similar analogy in **John 15** comparing himself to a vine and his disciples to branches. We must abide in him or else we are cut off and cast into the fire. A branch cut off from the vine has no more life and only waits to be thrown on a fire. How do we abide in the Lord Jesus? We abide in him by believing the gospel: Jesus was crucified, he died, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. (**Romans 1:16**). Paul taught us the relationship Gentile believers had to Israel. Gentile believers were grafted into the olive tree which is Israel. All of the Bible comes from Israel. Think about it. Almost everything in the Holy Bible was written by a Jewish believer. It was preserved and kept by Jewish believers. Christians, both Jew and Gentile believers, should have reverence and respect for Israel.

Romans 11:23-25

Paul mentioned here a "mystery" which he did not want Gentile believers to be ignorant of. Israel was now partly blind to the gospel until every Gentile who would be saved is saved. When the last Gentile who will believe is saved then something incredible happen to Israel as a nation: they will suddenly turn as one man to the Messiah. They will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as one man. As one people. As national Israel.

This event is still before us. I feel in my heart this is not far off. The days are approaching that the redeemer will return to Zion! The days are approaching when the Son of Man will step foot on the Mount of Olives. I cannot write about this without feeling a great wave of emotion. My heart is in my throat even now as I consider this. I believe we are that generation who will see the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, return to us quickly, Lord Jesus!

Romans 11:26-29

What does it mean that all Israel shall be saved? This is a prophecy of an event that is still yet in our future as I am writing today. This prophecy points to the second return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth at the end of the seven year tribulation. The Lord Jesus will return and set his foot once again in Israel. He will rescue and deliver Israel from the threat of the Antichrist and all of the work of the devil. All Israel will look upon him and they will believe in him. This is similar to how Joseph's brothers rejected him at first but later when he saved them they bowed down and accepted him. Joseph is a type of the Lord Jesus at the second return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

The deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness in Jacob. All Israel will turn away from unbelief and they will believe in their Messiah Jesus. He will save them from their sins and deliver them from their enemies. Amen!

Presently Israel is for the most part antagonistic to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, they are still beloved of God for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God made promises to Israel that are everlasting and God will keep all the promises which he made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and also to King David.

God's gifts and his calling on his people do not change. God's gift and calling on Israel will never change. If Christians believe that God changed his mind about Israel then they also have no assurance. If God changed his mind about Israel then he can change his mind about the church, right? But we know God does not change his mind. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God does not change his mind. What God has said God will also do.

This can be applied on a personal basis in our lives. Has God given you gifts and has God called you? God will not take back his gift or his calling on your life. We need to turn back to God, humble our hearts, and repent. The Lord is waiting for us to return to him with all of our hearts. Let us believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in his completed, finished work.

Romans 11:30-36

Here is the doxology and conclusion of the conversation Paul iterated several times in the last few chapters and throughout the book of Romans. He confessed that all of these matters were beyond his own understanding. Even Paul could only see these things through a dark glass (**1 Corinthians 13:12**), and his conclusion was that though we may understand some things in bits and pieces God will always remain far beyond whatever doctrinal category we attempt to create.

When I read these verses I am reminded, also, of the book of Job. At the end of that book Job and his companions realized that God was much bigger and larger and more powerful than what we can imagine with our feeble doctrines and weak belief systems. God cannot be contained by the imagination and mental framework of man's reasoning.

There is only one proper response to this great God who is above all things. The proper response is to give him glory, honor, and praise. To God be the glory. Great things he has done. Amen.

Romans Chapter 12

Romans 12:1

Now we take a different turn in the book of Romans. Until this point we've learned doctrine, but now Paul took a turn toward personal application. This was a pattern in Paul's letters. He taught believers who they were in Christ and covered doctrine. Toward the end of a letter he turned toward application of what he had covered.

In the first verse of **Romans 12** we see true spiritual authority. Did Paul demand they do what he said? Did he command them to do what he said? He made a humble plea to them. He besought these Roman brothers by the mercies of God. He asked them to apply what he taught them because God loved them. Our greatest motivation for living for the Lord Jesus is love. I've seen preachers and ministries inject other motives into their teaching and methods. They brow beat, threaten, and demand compliance to their leadership. But what did Paul do? He besought them by the mercies of God.

Paul asked them to apply the truth to their life because God loved them. God is merciful. This love and mercy should produce gratitude and a motivation to want to obey. If we cannot be persuaded to apply God's word to our lives out of a motive of love then nothing else will work. Men will not be brow beat, threatened, or manipulated into following Jesus. One cannot trick or deceive people into following Jesus. One cannot hold out the carrot of position and prestige to get people to follow Jesus forever.

There is only one sure foundation for obedience and that is heartfelt love for the Lord Jesus. Only love will succeed in the long run. All other motives will fall to the ground and fail. Only love will endure.

We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. What does this mean? The Christian life is not just about spiritual ideas but is practical. It is down to earth. We serve God when we pray and read the Bible. We also serve God when we go to our job and labor. We serve God on Sunday, and we serve God every day of the week in the many tasks we perform faithfully. We should work with all our heart as working for the Lord. (**Colossians 3:23**). Everything in our life is service to God.

I was once confused about what it meant to be in "*full time*" ministry. In one sense, I understand there are people who dedicate their careers to preaching the Bible. However, even in Paul's situation, this meant sometimes he needed to make tents. People did not always help him financially. We should rethink what full time ministry means, especially today as the outward structure of the church is under intense attack. We should rethink what having "*church*" means and what "*full time ministry*" means.

If you are a Christian you are in full time ministry. Paul said as Christians we offer our bodies in service to God. This means everything, the spiritual and physical, is devoted to God. A man is not just a spirit. A man is not just a body. A man is spirit, and soul, and body. (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**). We offer our entire life upon the altar to God. Don't hold anything back. Don't think you can just be a Christian on Sunday morning. Our service to God includes our whole life. Every day is dedicated in service to the Lord. Every day, every hour, every minute is consecrated to the Lord Jesus. This is our reasonable service.

Our reasonable response to what the Lord Jesus did for us is to give him our entire life. It is our reasonable response to offer ourselves to him. It is reasonable to offer my life to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Actually, this is the only sane thing any man can ever do with his life. Any other thing a man gives his life for is vanity and will end in regret and sorrow. The only life worth living is the life which is totally surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:2

Christians do not agree with the world system. This is an entire area which a Christian needs to comprehend. It is vitally important to understand the difference between the world system and the Kingdom of God. If we never understand the difference between the world system and the Kingdom of God how can we know if we are conformed to this world? We are commanded by the Holy Spirit to not be conformed to the world.

A good place to start discerning between what is of the world system and what is of the Kingdom of God is to understand the fundamental differences. One difference is that the world system is based and built on the principle of self-worship. At the heart of the world system is self. At the heart of the kingdom of God is Christ Jesus. This is a fundamental difference between the world system and the kingdom of God. At the heart of the world system is man and self-worship. At the heart of the kingdom of God is Jesus Christ.

In order not to be conformed to the world system we obey what the Lord Jesus said. We must deny our self and take up our cross. We must die to self. This can only be done by faith in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

How are we transformed by the renewing of our mind? We start by paying attention to what we look at. What do we listen to? What do we meditate on? These are basic steps we can take. How can we hope to be renewed in our minds if we pay no attention to what we feed our mind on? Think about this. Men are created to be conformed to whatever they set their eyes on. If the eyes are set on self then one will die spiritually. If one sets his mind on the Lord Jesus Christ then he will be filled with life. Jesus said he is the bread from heaven. We are to eat him like we eat bread. We must feed our soul, our mind, and spirit upon this bread from heaven. This is how we are renewed in our mind. This is how we are transformed. We are transformed, either bad or good, by what we feed our soul on. The soul has an appetite like the stomach. It craves stimulation, knowledge, input, excitement. It craves to be inspired by beauty. It craves experiences. We must learn to direct this hunger toward what will truly satisfy and not feed our soul crumbs the world system offers.

Proving God's will means we find out through personal experience that obedience to God's word is the best way to live. It is not merely one way to live but rather it is the best way a man can live. It is the best way because God created man to live in a relationship with him. We were not created to live independent of our Creator. We were made to be in union with the Lord.

When we walk in obedience to God's word then we find out that true satisfaction in life comes through obedience to the Lord. Happiness which lasts forever does not come by doing our own thing. When we do our own thing we experience pleasures of sin for a short season. Afterward we are left with a greater hunger and desperation to experience more. This is the path of addiction and darkness. It is the path that leads to the lake of fire. Instead, when we turn to God in repentance and put our faith in the Lord Jesus we find a life which gets better and better the longer we travel.

The thoughts I've shared are basic to the Christian life. Unless we learn to not be conformed to the world we will not make spiritual progress. Unless we can learn to be transformed by the renewing of our mind we will not make spiritual progress. This is basic Christian living.

Romans 12:3

The reason we think soberly is to fit in with others in the church. A Christian does not function in isolation. A Christian functions with other brothers and sisters in Christ. One of the quickest ways to destroy fellowship with others is pride. Paul exhorted us to think soberly and not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. A proper estimation of ourselves in light of the entire church is needed. When men think highly of themselves they will not listen to others and will not work with others in the church.

Sadly, I know I have failed in this regard. As a young Christian I believed I was one of the Green Beret in God's army. This belief did not help me get along with people in the church. Instead, I developed a critical attitude toward pastors. I would not listen to someone if they made only one mistake in what they said.

Think soberly. No church is perfect. No preacher is perfect. No group of Christians is perfect. However, the Lord Jesus promised that where two or three of us gather in his name that he is with us. The Lord is with Christians who gather together in his name. We want to be a part of that group. What stops us from being a part of the church is pride. We think too highly of ourselves. We think we are better than other Christians. We think we are more spiritual. We think we are more gifted. We put ourselves in a

different class of Christians. We think we are the elite Christian and these other people are uneducated, or ignorant, or biblical illiterate. Watch out! This attitude will separate you from the body of Christ. It will isolate you. It will turn you into a lonely Christian.

We need to consider where we fit in the body of Jesus Christ. I think I have finally understood my place in the church. The Lord called me to wash the feet of God's people. I am someone the Lord asked to take care of this task of washing people's feet. What does that mean? It means I am ready to listen to people. I am ready to hear what they say without passing judgment or being critical. It means I will give them God's word. It is the word of God which washes the feet of the saints. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The word washes us today. This does not mean God called me to stand behind a pulpit or in front of a group of people. I'm not over anybody. I am a servant. One by one I go around washing people's feet with the word of God. One by one I offer the word of God to others to refresh them, encourage them, to help them. I am called to edify, comfort, exhort with God's word.

This work involves denying self and not making a name for self. It is a calling to humble self, deny self, carry my cross. It means I don't put my problems on other people, but take all of my problems to God alone and let him carry my problems. I will ask no man to meet my needs, but only look to the Lord because he is my provider, he is my protector, he is my portion.

Think soberly about where you fit in the church. There is a great need for men and women of God to walk in humility and to be kind, generous, loving, forgiving, long suffering.

Romans 12:4-5

Paul compared the church to the human body. There are many members in the human body, many different parts which go into creating the whole body. In a similar way there are many different roles people occupy within the church to make it function. Why did Paul teach this?

We need to understand where we as individuals fit in the church. We need to do this with a serious mind and with humility. The importance of this is so that each person will perform their function and not try to take on what someone else does.

By nature men have the attitude of the world system. The world system is described by the Lord Jesus as people operating according to an elitist and hierarchical mindset. People in the world work together through the mechanism of self-worship, self-survival, pride, position, and prestige.

However, it is impossible for members in the church to function this way. People still try to run the church like a worldly corporation but this method does not promote spiritual life.

We need to consider who we are with humility. We are all members of the body of Christ. Most churches in modern America think there is only one member in the church and that is the pastor. Everyone else just occupies a pew on Sunday morning. If they show up and get listed on the attendance roster they have done what is required. This is worldly and carnal thinking.

We are the body of Christ. Each one of us are members. We need to realize where we fit in the church and be faithful to do our part. Do this with humility. Do this knowing that we as an individual are only a small part but no matter how small we are still important to the Lord and the church.

Romans 12:6-8

Here we have a list of spiritual gifts which Christians receive from the Lord in order to build, edify, exhort, and comfort others in the church. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build the church. Some people may have more than one gift, but I notice people tend to be stronger in one or two gifts. For example, someone who proclaims the word (prophecy) may not necessarily be a good administrator. Sometimes a preacher is not as merciful or his mercy towards others is not cheerful. You may find someone who is merciful but they are poor teachers of the word. This is why we need each other. God has made us so that we need one another. We cannot truly function as the church without working with other Christians.

Let's list the gifts: *prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy*. Obviously in many ways these gifts overlap. I don't think we need to keep all these separate and try to identify what gifts we have or don't have. I believe the Holy Spirit can use us depending on the situation in any gift. I am not normally a merciful person but I can remember moments in relating to another person that the Lord gave me a supernatural capacity for mercy toward someone. I knew it was not something which came out of me but was a gift God gave me for that person.

Probably in my life I see myself using gifts of exhortation, teaching, and prophecy. Even when I write, I default to exhortation. However, I do feel I have patience to learn topics exhaustively which makes a good teacher of doctrine. Also, I know I experience frequently in my life the gift of proclaiming God's word to people around me.

On the other hand, I'm weak with mercy, administration, or ministry. I don't by default take initiative to serve other people and rarely think about organizing other people to get a project done. I have seen other people with those gifts and I'm pretty sure it is not me. However, the Lord can use us in whatever capacity depending on the circumstances.

I would exhort us to always remain flexible and don't assign ourselves a title based on what we think we are gifted in. Let God use us no matter what our gifts may be and we may have to be ready to perform tasks that are outside of the gifts we think we have. We can cross reference this list of gifts with another list of spiritual gifts which Paul outlined in **First Corinthians 12**.

Romans 12:9

From verse 9 down to the end of chapter 12 we have a list of instructions from Paul and the Holy Spirit. We start with his first instruction. Let love be without dissimulation. A definition of "*dissimulation*": from Latin "*dissimulate*" is *concealment of one's thoughts, feelings, or character*. Paul's instruction, then, is for our love to be sincere and without hypocrisy. How could someone show love and be insincere? Isn't love always a good thing? No, it is not always good. People pretend to love others so they can get an advantage over them or manipulate or control others.

As a Christian our love is to be wholehearted, straight forward, and sincere. We are not to love people expecting to receive something in return. Those who say they love others and expect something in return are not really loving in sincerity. Sincere love does not expect anything in return. Real, biblical love is demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved others and blessed others with a sincere motive. He loved us when there was no reason to love us. God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (**Romans 5:8**).

It is not possible for us to love like Christ did unless the Lord Jesus is in our hearts. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we love other people and expect nothing in return. This takes a man who denies self, takes up his cross, and walks in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Along with love we also cleave to what is good and abhor what is evil. People today twist the word "love" into perverse contexts. Biblical love is good, pure, and holy. We cling to what is good. Abhor what is evil. If we read the Bible, if the Holy Spirit lives in us, it will not be hard to discern what is evil and what is good.

Romans 12:10-16

Brotherly love is having a sense of affection for people. This is a sense of community with people who are of like-minded faith. This is impossible when everyone has their own opinions or follows their own favorite Bible teacher or Bible doctrines. Brotherly love grows in an atmosphere of unity and like-mindedness.

We give preference to others. This means thinking of the other person before you think of yourself. This is not natural to humans but is an attitude that must be learned. We start by placing value on putting others before ourselves. The value of this was taught by the Lord Jesus when he washed the feet of his disciples.

The Christian is not lazy but passionate about life, work, and business. In everything we do let us do it as unto the Lord. Work for the Lord and not just your employer. Work with all your heart. Be passionate and fervent in doing a good job.

We rejoice because we have hope in the Lord, we are patient in our trials because we know God has a plan and he is in control, and through it all we pray, pray, pray. Prayer does move God on our behalf. I've seen it myself. When we feel tempted to worry or stress out then pray instead. Find a place and go pray.

We need to be aware of the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. We take care of people in the church. There are people in the church who suffer because they lack material resources. Know who those people are and check on them. Make sure you are the one God uses to supply their need. Let's make people feel at home in our house. Be ready at all times to share how much you care by listening to people and sitting down with them over a meal.

Pride is the enemy of the Christian. It causes you to separate yourself from people in church who need you. Don't just hang around people who are on your level but look for people you can serve in the church. Look for those who need encouragement, comfort, and material help. What is the purpose of helping people who can help you? That is the what the world does. Don't walk in pride or position like the world. Instead humble yourself and associate with brothers of low position. In God's eyes we are all on the same level. The Lord Jesus made sure we were all on the same level when he humbled himself, washed his disciples' feet, and then went to the cross at Calvary. Christ died for us. Let's be ready to humble ourselves and obey God in serving others.

Romans 12:17-21

Unbelievers get revenge and attempt to execute justice for themselves. This is not allowed for the Christian. We are not to seek revenge. Instead, we are commanded to love our enemies, forgive those who persecute us or mistreat us or sin against us, and overcome evil by doing good. Overcome evil with good.

This is not easy. It requires a firm grasp on who God is and a steadfast faith in God's ability to oversee every detail of our lives. Our flesh and the devil will attempt to provoke us to retaliate against people. This is the wrong course of action for any Christian. Our responsibility is to turn the other cheek always.

Paul teaches us that vengeance belongs to God. We are not smart enough and it is not our responsibility to see that other people get what is coming to them. The Lord did not give this job to us. Don't consider getting even with other people. Instead, if someone steals your dinner then give them the dessert too. Overcome evil with good.

Don't be pulled into talking about people behind their back because you can't stand them. This is a subtle way of getting even with that person. Don't try to put others down in conversation. This is a verbal revenge tactic and the Lord will not be happy if you do this. Don't talk about others period, ever. It is best to just not talk about other people.

These instructions might seem impossible. However, it is not impossible. God can change the way we think and react and how we feel. If we will humble our heart before God he can give us the grace we need to overcome evil by doing good. Remember God's promise: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. **Philippians 4:13**.

Romans Chapter 13

Romans 13:1

This is a difficult passage for people who can only think with human logic. How can every power which exist be ordained of God? This describes human government. The higher power described was human government. This means kings, queens, or presidents.

The New Testament teaches us that Christians are to submit to government. The apostle Peter broke down submission to authority into smaller units in his letter. He described the duty of the Christian to submit in every sphere of life. This included submission to human government. We submit to parents, family members, spouses, employers, political leaders, and to church leaders. There is no sphere of life in which we should rebel against authority.

The idea of rebellion against government is not biblical. People who rebel against government, including the Americans who rebelled against the British government, did so by going outside Bible doctrine. They may have had many good reasons to rebel but the reasons were not biblical reasons. It is not the duty of Christians to rebel against government.

Our example is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus never taught his disciples to rebel against government. He was completely apolitical in his teachings. Jesus did not teach people to rebel against religious leaders. He did warn people about the teachings of religious leaders which were unbiblical but he did not teach rebellion against authority of government.

Why is this? **Romans 13:1** tells us. The powers that be are ordained by God. God sets who he wants into power. We see this in the book of Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar. We see this in the Bible how God raised up one nation and put down another.

It is not the Christian's job to rebel against government. I do not believe the Bible teaches Christians to take part in rebellion against government.

How is this applied in our lives? It depends. There are examples from history of Christians who did participate in resisting government. I do not condemn what they did and I do not judge what they did. They followed their conscience. My point is to make it clear that the Bible does not teach Christians in the New Testament to rebel against government. In fact, I believe the New Testament teaches submission to authority many times by different writers. We should always do everything possible to have a humble attitude toward people in a position of authority. Read **1 Timothy 2:1-4**.

Romans 13:2-5

Human government serves the purpose of God in maintaining peaceful society. God uses human government to maintain order so people can live in peace.

Paul taught that anyone who rebels against the government receives punishment. Anyone who resists the government resists an ordinance God put into place. As a result the person will suffer for resisting. Government is put in place by God and for God's purpose.

Under normal circumstances people who do what is right have nothing to fear from government. Our minds are always filled with exceptions to this because propaganda injects this into our mind. The spirit behind mainstream media such as news, movies, TV, and music is designed to turn men's hearts toward rebellion. This is fermenting in society today. The work of the devil is to incite men to rebel against authority.

The job of government is to reward those who do good and punish those who do evil. It is the responsibility of government to punish evildoers. Paul said that the job of government was to execute wrath against those who do evil.

We should submit to the government, not only because of the fear of wrath, but for the sake of our own conscience. We should do what is right because doing wrong will harm ourselves.

It is important to teach children to respect authority. If they learn to respect authority at home then they will not grow up and rebel against government. What we see today is a generation of people who were never taught to respect authority in their home. Now they have no respect for government.

People who participate in riots, protests, and resisting government will lose. God ordained that they would lose. They cannot win. They will suffer the consequences rebellion brings.

Romans 13:6-8

Paul continued with the theme of submission to government but also introduced another thought in this section. He repeated what the Lord Jesus taught about rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Pay taxes. We should respect the authority of government. Government acts as God's servant to bring order to society.

We are taught to owe no man anything but to love one another. We should not owe people anything except the debt we owe all men to love them. The Lord Jesus loved us and showed his love by dying on the cross for us. We will always be indebted to love people.

Owing people means we are in debt. It is hard to live in the world and not be in debt. The world system is built to put people in debt. Debt is slavery. However, we can minimize debt by frugal lifestyles. Don't live beyond what you bring in. Don't get in debt unless there is no other choice. The way the world is set up we cannot avoid debt to buy a house or car. The medical system will put you in debt quickly if you have ongoing illness. These are unavoidable. However, as a Christian my goal is to strive toward being debt free as possible. Owe no man anything is the goal.

We have a debt to always love others. Love is the fulfillment of God's law.

Romans 13:9-10

Love never fails. It is the fulfillment of God's law if we do this: Love God and love our neighbor.

Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied that the greatest commandment was to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second greatest is to love our neighbor. Jesus defined for us what "neighbor" means in his parable about the good Samaritan. Our neighbor is whoever needs our help. Anyone. Everyone. We are to love each person who crosses our path. We treat others with honor, respect, and love people in the same way Jesus did. How did Jesus love people? He loved us enough that he died on the cross for us so that we could escape God's just wrath against sin.

It is not necessary for us to memorize the laws Israel observed in the Old Testament. Instead, Jesus summarized the law and prophets. The complete summary is to love God and love our neighbor.

This is another reason I think it is illogical for Christians to want to be "*Hebrew*" Christians. It makes no sense. We do not grow spiritually nor do we commend ourselves to God by striving to obey detailed laws of Israel. The only law we keep before us is the law of love. Even love can be misunderstood or put into a sinful context. Men change the meanings of words. This is the work of the devil to constantly change the meaning of words so men never know where they stand. Love is best defined in the Bible. The old English word for love in the Bible is "charity". Read **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**.

Romans 13:11-14

Paul said we should "*know the time*". What does that mean? It means we should not live with our head in the sand. We should not be ignorant of what is happening around us. Awareness of the world around us is vital for a Christian. We need to be aware of world events, and specifically, we need to be alert to where we are at in our individual lives.

Paul pointed to world events around him. He looked at what happened and saw that it pointed to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know his letter was written thousands of years ago. People take this as a reason to dismiss Paul's urgent plea that we be alarmed at the day we live in. When we do this we do not see that the Bible is written from the perspective of eternity. In light of God's viewpoint it is urgent for us to realize the night is far spent and the day is at hand.

Our life could be over any moment and we will enter eternity. If world events move slowly from our point of view we still do not have time to relax. Our life could end any moment. God could speak a word and life could end. Our time could be up any moment. What keeps us alive? Only God's mercy and grace keeps us alive. Our next breath is in God's hands. He holds our soul in life.

We need to remove everything that is compromise. Paul said to "*cast off the works of darkness*". Any area which bothers our conscience needs to be addressed. We need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day. How do we do that? We can thank God every day in prayer that he took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. God himself put us into Christ Jesus and united us together with the Lord in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Believe the gospel every day. Confess it, believe it, stand on it. Don't be moved away from the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Live it, thank God for it, think about it, and pray it.

I try to start each day thanking the Lord for what he did for me. I thank the heavenly Father for placing me in Christ Jesus so I am united with the Lord Jesus in his finished, completed work. I thank God for filling me with the Holy Spirit. This is a good way to put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day.

When we do this then also think in practical terms about your daily life and search anything which would make it easy for you to give in to sin, temptation, the flesh, or the devil. Deal with those areas brutally and without mercy. Read **Psalm 119:37**.

Romans Chapter 14

Romans 14:1

The weak brother was afraid to eat meat and thought he was spiritual by keeping the Sabbath. However, because we know better and are confident in what Christ accomplished we still need to be gracious toward the weak brother. When I say "gracious" I do not mean "condescending".

We know eating meat does not subtract from our relationship with Jesus. Our non-observance of certain days should not make us think we are better than the brother who does. The one who is weak in his faith is the one who does not eat meat for religious reasons. The one who is weak in his faith is someone who thinks he must observe holy days. Paul focused here on the attitude of Christians toward one another. There will be brothers who are weak in faith. There will be those who are convinced of the complete work of Christ and know they cannot add or take away from what Christ did. The point is our love for one another in the church. How do men with such different ideas about doctrine and religious topics get along with each other?

We make a commitment to receive each other. What does it mean to receive one another? We accept people where they are. We love people exactly where they are in their walk with the Lord. Some people have walked with the Lord a long time. Some are just starting. You put these people in the same building and there must be a guiding principle which goes beyond difference of opinion.

The guiding principle is to love our brother and accept him. Also, Paul added that we do not accept people with the idea that as soon as we can we will get them straightened out. I've learned the hard way you cannot make people believe the way you do. Sometimes the more you reason with people the more determined they stick with their position.

If someone is weak in faith pray for them. Pray the Lord will help them. The Lord is the only one who can help them. Our part is to accept brothers and sisters in Christ. Our part is to love them and accept them where they are.

Romans 14:2-4

We have a tendency to oppress brothers in Christ with opinions. We don't stop with our personal preferences. We want everyone to have the same opinion we do. This can be damaging when this kind of oppression is allowed in the church.

People have different opinions on what God allows or doesn't allow when it comes to topics such as eating and drinking. Notice Paul said the person who was weak in faith abstained from eating meat. I don't know why people would abstain from eating meat for religious reasons, but Paul said it demonstrated weak faith when people mix faith with food. Perhaps this went back to dietary laws God gave ancient Israel. For example, pork is not kosher for a Jew. There were other examples but Paul said abstaining from certain foods showed a lack of faith. The Lord Jesus himself declared all foods were clean.

However, all this was not the point Paul was driving at. His point was that no matter what opinion people had we should love one another. Don't judge others over non-essential issues. Whether we eat meat or abstain from meat we still accept people.

Paul said to his own master he stood or fell. This was an idea which is overlooked but I would like to underline this. Each Christian has the same Master. Each person stands before the Lord themselves. If a brother in Christ is convinced it is OK to eat steak or pork then don't judge him. Instead, make sure you are right with God. Whatever opinion we have on this we should be convinced before the Lord. Do not oppress other people with your opinion on non-essentials.

There are certain things Christians agree on which are essential facts of the gospel. Outside these essentials we give people freedom to follow the Lord. Each person has his own relationship with his Master. The Lord deals with each one of us as individuals. The Lord knows where each person is at in their understanding.

Why did Paul have to teach these subjects? Obviously there was disagreement in the church. However, Paul underlined the importance of keeping these topics in perspective. One thing the Lord Jesus condemned the religious leaders about was that they strained a gnat but swallowed camels. This meant they focused on non-essential elements of faith while neglecting important matters.

Paul tried to steer the church to major on major issues and to not oppress others with opinions. What we eat or don't eat, what we drink or don't drink: these are opinions of our own conscience and experience.

What is important is that we love people and do not cause the weaker brother to be offended by the freedoms we believe we have.

Romans 14:5-6

Paul continued to underline the fact that there will be differences of opinion among God's people over non-essential issues. These non-essential issues include observance of certain days or whether a Christian should eat non-kosher foods. I believe Paul did not hesitate to eat any food. I don't think he was keen on observing special days. To Paul the Lord Jesus was the Sabbath Day. Jesus himself is our rest. Jesus fulfilled all the types from the Old Testament. There was no reason to cling to shadows when you have the fullness of Christ.

However, Paul realized every believer is at different stages in spiritual growth. It is better not to get people focused on non-essentials. He exhorted us to love one another, accept one another, and overlook opinions a brother may have on non-essential issues.

Romans 14:7-9

Isolation is not an option for a Christian. Some are more comfortable in isolation. I knew a man once who loved God and knew his Bible but did not like people. He did not go to church. Over the years I observed how he became strange, disconnected, and aloof. Eventually he stopped returning phone calls or hand-written letters I sent him.

None of us lives to himself. It is work to deal with people. Not all people have an answer. Most problems can only be solved by the person turning to God and putting their faith in the Lord Jesus. Even Christians suffer terribly with personal, family, or financial problems.

This life is short. We should live for the Lord in community with believers. We should not isolate. Even if our natural inclination is isolation we need to work at being with people. The church needs each one working together to function correctly.

We do not live to ourselves and we do not die to ourselves. If we live we live for the Lord. And when we die we are the Lord's. God has complete ownership of our life and he knows the day we will die. Read **Psalm 90:12**.

Romans 14:10-13

Why do we judge our brother? This is a good question. Why? Why do we look at others with a critical eye? Why do we examine the words, actions, and attitudes of other people so closely? What drives us to do this?

Each will answer this at the judgment seat of Christ. Christians are not exempt from giving an answer to the Lord for what they did while in the body. Our salvation is secure. This does not mean we will not be required to explain ourselves. We should fear God and not judge others. We should not be a stumbling block. What is worse than judging someone? Becoming a stumbling block.

How often do we take the time to examine ourselves? Do we know if we are a stumbling block to someone?

We should be serious minded. We should fear God when we are tempted to speak evil or judge someone. Are we sure we are smart enough to judge people?

I pray the Lord will help me. I feel convicted when I remember how often I judged people. I am certain the motive behind judging others is because of pride. May the Lord help me humble myself. Help me to not be a stumbling block. Help me think before I speak and bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ.

Romans 14:14-23

I've heard pastors boast that they eat steak. When I hear this it makes me cringe. I cringe because I remember these verses where Paul said if we have faith about food to keep it to ourselves. We can condemn ourselves by being uncharitable to weaker Christians.

I've seen Christians boast about how they drink alcohol. Their conscience is clear but they are in danger of stumbling a weaker Christian. What about the brother who may struggle with alcohol or addiction? People who boast about their freedom violate the spirit of what Paul taught in **Romans 14**.

The whole point is for us to build up others. We don't do this by boasting of freedom to eat and drink. Paul said he was convinced that no food or drink was sinful. However, we should not hurt others by exercising our freedom if by doing so we cause other people to sin.

Though I am convinced that food and drink is not sinful I would rather live like someone who is weak so that I do not offend those who are weak. I would rather abstain so that I don't offend people. There are people in the church who are weak in matters of eating and drinking. This is not just a problem in the first century church. There is a serious problem in the church with people overcome by addictions.

For a long time I judged Christian who had the freedom to drink a glass of wine. I no longer judge those Christians. I don't believe they are in sin. But I think they should be careful that someone does not see them exercising their freedom and stumble the weaker brother.

There is too much alcoholism and addiction in society for me to indulge in drinking and have a clear conscience. I want to live in a such a way that even the weakest Christian will not be offended by how I live.

Romans Chapter 15

Romans 15:1-3

We should define the weak and the strong. In context we know the strong are those who are convinced that all foods are clean. Jesus taught his twelve disciples that all foods were clean. This lesson was repeated so the disciples would learn the rules on clean and unclean foods no longer applied to the church. People in the church do not get circumcised to prove they are Christians. Jewish dietary laws

no longer apply to Christians. The weak person thinks these rules still apply to us and are afraid to eat unclean food.

Paul taught the "strong" Christian that his job was to bear the infirmities of his weak brother. Don't do this with a smug attitude. The motive in bearing with the weaker brother was to help him for his good. Our goal is to please others. This is the example the Lord Jesus set for us. Our goal is to please the Lord by bearing the infirmities of the weak. The Christian takes the low place of serving, bearing with others, and putting one's self last. We may have knowledge but it doesn't matter what we know if it causes our brother to stumble. We bear the infirmities of the weak for the purpose of building them up and being an example of humility.

The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking but it is about living for the Lord with a pure heart and in humility toward others.

Romans 15:4

Paul taught us one reason why God gave the Bible. The Lord provided the Bible for our learning so that we through patience and the comfort of the scripture might have hope. The Lord provided us with a Bible so we could have hope. Where would I be today without the hope which God's word gives to me? All the things which God had men write down in the Bible were recorded so God's people would have hope. He is the God of hope. He causes us to hope in Him.

There is hope all through the Bible, from the beginning when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden. God gave them hope by promising a Seed would crush the head of the serpent. He gave us hope by the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He gave us hope by revealing himself to Moses as the great I Am That I Am.

He reveals himself to us through the Bible as our provider, our protector, and as our portion. The Lord is our inheritance.

I have hope today because my life is in God's hands. He knows the plans he has for me. His plans are for good and not for evil. He gives me a future and a hope. He is the God who holds my hand. He works out everything for my good and his glory. All things work together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose. (**Romans 8:28**). He will carry on to completion the good work which he started in me. (**Philippians 1:6**). He is the Potter and I am the clay. He will be faithful to complete what he started in me so long ago.

Romans 15:5-7

Paul circled back again to his teaching on unity and accepting others in the church. We are not to focus on non-essential things which divide people, but instead focus on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which unites us all. The gospel is outlined in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

We are to unite together with people who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he died for our sins, that he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This matters within the context of the facts that Jesus was fully man and fully God. Jesus is God, and he is also a man. He is the God-Man. This is the context of the gospel that he died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again.

Keeping our focus on this makes Christians like minded. Keeping our minds on the gospel will unite us together so that with one mind and one mouth we glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should receive one another as Christ received us. How did Christ receive us? He died for us when we were yet sinners. He loved us when we did not know him or even care about him. God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 15:8-12

Paul used the Bible to prove that Jew and Gentile are united by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a revelation given to Paul about the church. We see this in **Ephesians 3:3-6**. Paul said it was a mystery to the prophets in the Old Testament but it was revealed by Paul and other apostles that Jews and Gentiles both would form the church. God united Jew and Gentile through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. In the church there is no longer Jew or Gentile but we are all one in Christ Jesus. Read **Colossians 3:11**.

The underlying principle is that our identity is in the Lord Jesus. All other facets of who we are come second. Primarily we are in Christ. We are Christians. Our skin color, background, culture, or language is secondary and pales in comparison to this great one fact: we are in Christ. This makes everything else about who we are insignificant.

The Lord will have men and women from every nation, tribe and tongue in heaven. People from all over the world make up the household of faith and will be united together in eternal praise to the heavenly Father.

Romans 15:13

God is the God of hope. The Lord is the Lord of hope. This is what we need to grab today and every day. The Lord is not against us. He wants us to lay down our weapons, put up our hands, and surrender. We cannot win against the law of sin and death at work in our body. He can help us, though, if we will turn from our self and put our trust in his son Jesus Christ.

There is joy and peace when we believe in the Lord Jesus. This joy and peace is not dependent on circumstances. I remember reading the testimony of Richard Wurmbrand and how when he was a prisoner in a Communist prison that he found joy and peace in believing the Lord Jesus. He experienced the presence of God in the darkest circumstances. Others have said the same thing. There is true joy and peace in believing the Lord Jesus, and this joy unspeakable and this peace which passes all understanding does not depend upon what is happening around us.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. We can abound in hope because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome every situation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord gives us his peace, his joy, and his hope. He is the God of hope. He does not disappoint us. He said he will never leave us and he will never forsake us. All of his promises to us are yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

Romans 15:14-22

I see in these verses the need for men who are gifts in the church and also for those who are in the church to function correctly in relationship to one another.

What I mean is that there is a real distinction between the church and God's gifts to the church. These gifts are men which Paul listed as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. However, even if a man is not in this list, he is still called upon to admonish his brother in Christ. Paul said they were "able also to admonish one another". Yet, even though Christians can encourage, edify, and admonish one another there is still a need for men who are the Lord's gift to the church. There is a need for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Paul said he fully preached the gospel of Christ. Paul defined for us the parameters of the gospel in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Sadly, I have been to churches for a long time and never heard the Pastor mention that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. Not one time. This is an indication to me that we are living in a time of apostasy in the church in America.

Paul fully preached the gospel. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."* (**Romans 1:16**).

Romans 15:23-33

These passages where Paul outlined his travel plans give us insight into his missionary journeys. Many have undertaken to map out exactly the routes Paul traveled in his work. Here we can tell that Paul had not yet traveled to Rome but it was his goal. He asked the Christians in Rome to pray that he would get there. He believed it was God's will for him to travel to Rome to preach the gospel there.

When we read the account in the book of Acts we know Paul did make it to Rome, but perhaps not as he thought he would. He got there as a prisoner aboard a slave ship.

We don't know how the Lord will get us where we need to be in life. We can trust God will use our lives to glorify his son Jesus Christ. All we need to do is surrender our lives to the Lord, and trust in him to bring it to pass. He will guide and direct us. God is over all. He is able to move in our lives, in our circumstances, and also in the hearts of people around us.

Romans Chapter 16

In this final chapter we have Paul's greetings to members of churches. He ends this letter like he began it. With the gospel of Jesus Christ and with God's grace. Hopefully we have learned to do the same in our lives. *Remember to keep the gospel of Jesus Christ in your heart and in your mind so that when we have opportunity we will share this good news to all who will listen. It is the gospel which is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.*

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians Chapter 1

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Several times in Paul's epistles he mentioned his fellow workers. He mentioned Sosthenes as a Christian brother who was with him. Perhaps it was Sosthenes who transcribed the letter for Paul.

Paul's role as an apostle was important to establish because people should know Paul was sent by God. Paul was not someone off the street but was a special messenger sent by God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This commission was not from man but through the will of God.

His letter was to the Corinthian Christians. These people were the church of God at Corinth. As Watchman Nee noted the church was always designated geographically rather than by doctrines of men. Today men divide over names and doctrines of men but the only division in the early church was geography.

Paul's greeting included a pronouncement of God's grace upon them from which they also received God's peace. This was a greeting which perhaps had its basis in what the church consisted of: Jews and Gentiles. Grace was a Greek word and shalom was distinctively Jewish. Both Jews and Gentiles together make up the church of Jesus Christ.

The Corinthian Christians were called saints. They did not need to do supernatural works or die as a martyr to become saints. As we see as we read this letter the Corinthians were not special Christians but rather had many problems Paul confronted. Nevertheless they were saints. Don't allow man-made religion take away who you are in Christ Jesus. If you believe the gospel you are a saint.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

We have not gone far yet in this letter and already Paul mentioned some doctrine we need to keep in the front of our mind as we live for the Lord Jesus.

Paul said there was an attitude of "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Does this attitude seem to us today to be a quaint, old-fashioned attitude for a Christian to have? Do we feel superior in our knowledge of the Bible, even smarter than Paul who thought Jesus could come back at any moment? After all, it's been at least 2,000 years now and Jesus has not come back yet. Surely those early Christians were just uninformed and ignorant, right?

Or maybe not. Maybe they were a lot smarter and closer to the Lord than what we give them credit. I look at the Bible as truth written from an eternal perspective. I don't think Paul or Peter or any of the apostles misunderstood the prophecy that Jesus was coming back to the earth soon. I think they did right living with an urgency that the Lord Jesus could return at any time. Because that is exactly the impression the Lord gave them.

Perhaps as years wore on Peter wondered. We see in Peter's letter he made the comment "*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*". (**2 Peter 3:8**). Some people get

sidetracked with that statement, but I think what he meant was that God does not measure time the same way we measure time. Our lives are short indeed in the light of two thousand years.

The early Christians died a long time ago. But when the Lord Jesus returns and they are raised to receive resurrected bodies it won't seem long to them. See what I mean? Time is relative to where you are. When we look at the Bible from eternity two thousand years might be considered as 2 days or a short amount of time.

Christians should be careful not to have dismissive attitude toward the early church's eager looking for the return of Jesus Christ. We do well to imitate this attitude because whether he returns in our life or not it does not matter. When we are raised up it will be as if it happened while we were alive.

For the Christian to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord Jesus. There is no death if you are a Christian. You may leave the physical body but you never die. Death according to the Bible is separation from God. Life is to be present with the Lord Jesus. He is resurrection and life.

Paul told the Corinthians that God is faithful. We discover the Corinthians had many problems which Paul corrected. He wanted them to get their eyes on the Lord and not on themselves.

Our mistake when the Lord corrects us is to feel sorry for ourselves. That is the wrong response. Our response should be to say, "yes, Lord, I am wrong, and you are right." He is right. I am wrong. Simple. Be on the Lord's side even against yourself. Get your eyes off yourself and your pride and get your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy of all our attention.

Notice Paul said these Corinthians were not lacking spiritual gifts. We find this out more as we go forward. They were not afraid of the supernatural and had not developed a theology that said God quit doing miracles after the Bible was complete. People who think like that are similar to the Pharisees who thought they contain God in a religious system.

Even with all their spiritual gifts and problems Paul encouraged them that it would be God who would carry them on and complete his work in them. He would confirm them to the end. All this depended on God and not on them. Their part was to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and keep believing it every day.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Satan is clever in dividing the church into factions which compete against each other. How does he do this? It is simple. All you need to do is get Christians to follow a charismatic leader. Get them to exalt a theologian. All that is needed to divide the church is for Christians to lift up men.

Why is this common? It is human nature to worship self. The outward manifestation of worshiping self is to magnify the names of men. This work of dividing the church is subtle because most of the names of men which we lift up were spiritual and intelligent men. When we follow men we immediately divide the church. When we put emphasis on systems of theology men create rather than on the gospel then we are deceived again.

This is an ancient device of the devil. He used it before the church was completely on its feet in the first century. Paul confronted this pride in the Corinthians. What pride we have to exalt men and become followers after names.

Paul's goal was to teach people in the church to unite instead of divide. Dividing is a natural result of following the names of men. Unity comes when people fix their mind on the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. This takes humility for everyone. Division is the result of pride. Unity is the result of humility.

I could say a lot more about "names". It is important we learn that it is basic to the Christian life that we deny our "name" which is the symbol for "self". Deny self! Take up your cross. Follow Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:14-17

Why do men put emphasis on water baptism? Paul did not put emphasis on baptism. He insisted that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel. Preach the gospel! Why is there such interest in baptism?

At one time I attended a certain church on a regular basis. The pastor approached my wife and I about putting our names on the church roster. He wanted us to "join" the church since we were already regular attenders. We went ahead and did as he asked. Later on I wondered what motivated the pastor to get us on the church roster. It dawned on me what might have been the motivation. The more names on the church roster the better the church looked to district leaders of that denomination. It was about building the local church through gathering men's names under the umbrella of a church. Give the church a name and bring in numbers of people.

This is how the world system was originated at Babel. They wanted to make a name and gather together under a name so they could be great and powerful. This is an underlying principle of the world system. Make a name. Exalt the name by bringing people underneath the name. The more numbers the more provision and protection.

Why do Pastors stress baptism? We see Paul did not emphasize baptism. Paul saw the danger in baptizing people. It was easy for people to follow a man who baptized them. This is how people are naturally. This human tendency to follow men was something Paul resisted. Why? Because it is the spirit which works in unbelievers. It is how the world system operates and organizes itself. The reason some pastors are interested in baptizing people is so the name of their church and their name become more powerful. The more baptism numbers the more powerful they are or so they might think. It is a way of measuring or proving success through numbers. I know for a fact many churches record the numbers of baptisms they have. Why? Why are numbers recorded? It is connected to provision, prestige, protection. Exalt a name through multiplying numbers! Build a church through multiplication of numbers! Someone decided that the best way to track success is by how many names are on the church roll or by how many people are baptized.

This is not the true church. Men who lead like this are blind to what they are practicing. They are blind to the spirit controlling them. They do not see that they operate according to the principle the world system does. Or maybe they do realize it and think that is just how things should be. But it is not the way the Bible teaches the true church operates. This is not the way to build a church. How do we build the church? Preach the gospel!

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Here we have a contrast made between man's ways and God's ways. God chose a method of salvation that to the unbeliever is foolishness. However, for those who believe it is the power of God for salvation.

Paul quoted from the Old Testament to prove that God chooses methods which humble men. God always uses methods which resist and oppose the pride of men. He did not choose a method that a wise or strong man would choose, but instead chose his only begotten Son to be crucified and die for our sins. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

As people pursue the wisdom of the world they stray further from the Lord. Worldly wisdom blinds people to the gospel. They think people who believe the gospel are stupid but those who believe the gospel are saved.

Those whom God calls know that the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God. No matter how foolish the gospel may seem to unbelievers it is wiser than worldly wisdom. The gospel may appear to be weak but it is stronger than any philosophy or psychology or self-help program people come up with. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. This gospel is for everyone, for Jew, for Gentile, for everyone who believes.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Why doesn't God call men who are wise, strong, or mighty? This is a good question to ask. Paul's list of foolish, weak, base, and despised people stands in stark contrast to the value system of the world. This demonstrates how completely opposite the kingdom of God and the world system are.

The world system looks for the mighty, noble, wise, and strong. It searches for those who exude self-confidence and pride. This is what the world loves. This is the choice the world makes. They boast of wisdom, strength, and might.

God has not called them to his kingdom. They are slaves of the world system and worshipers of self. Those who belong to God are who the world calls foolish, weak, base, and despised. I have to laugh at the insanity of people who do not believe in God. It is obvious to those who walk in the Holy Spirit how insane unbelievers are. They look at Christians as foolish, weak, base, and despised. But God chose us as his own. He wrote his name on us. We belong to him. We will live forever with him. Our home is not this world but another kingdom which will last forever. Our boast is not in ourselves. We are nothing. Christ is everything! The Lord Jesus is everything. He is all I need.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

This verse is filled with truth to set us free from self, sin, the world system, and from the devil.

Let's identify who this verse talks about. "*But of him*". Who is him? "*But of him are ye*". Who is ye? "*...in Christ Jesus*". The "him" is God the Father, or it could be God the Holy Spirit. "Ye" is the Corinthian Christians, and indirectly us as well. We are included in this "ye". **God the Father put us in Christ Jesus!** In Christ Jesus is the position of every born again Christian. We live in Christ Jesus. We do not live outside of Christ. We are in him.

What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? It means when Jesus Christ died on the cross we died in him and with him. It means when Jesus was buried we were buried. It means when Jesus was raised from the dead we were raised from the dead. We are in Christ Jesus. We are, even now, raised up together with him and seated with the Lord in heavenly places. This is our position in Christ. People say this is positional truth but I say this is true truth. It is not temporary. It is eternal. Our place in Christ Jesus is more real than this temporary world system we are in now.

Who put us in Christ Jesus? We did not put ourselves in Christ Jesus. How could we? It would be impossible for us to place ourselves into Christ Jesus. From first to last this is God's work. It is not about what we can do or have done. No! It is all about what God did through Christ Jesus and how he put us in his Son Jesus Christ.

This goes beyond forgiveness of sins. That is a wonderful benefit from being in Christ. Our sins are washed away. However, forgiveness of sins is the beginning of what God planned for those who are in Christ Jesus. A few more things happened also. We are delivered from self, from sin and death, saved out of the world system, and have overcome the devil. That is a lot more than forgiveness of sins.

This is the gospel which you never hear anymore. I've listened intently week after week to hear if a Pastor would preach this gospel. If you feed on TV for spiritual food you won't hear the gospel. As a matter of fact, you'll hear something which replaces the true gospel with what I call "Christian witchcraft". I won't go into that because I want to get back to being in Christ Jesus.

I would like to recommend a few books for further study on this topic: The Normal Christian Life, by Watchman Nee; The Spiritual Man, by Watchman Nee; Victory Over Sin and Self, by David Wilkerson. These books helped me tremendously to have a better understanding of what it means to be in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians Chapter 2

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

Paul emphasized the gospel. Why would people preach with excellency of speech and wisdom? One reason I can think of: pride. A man whose mind is controlled by the world system of position, prestige, and pride would try to preach with excellency of speech and wisdom.

Paul was not filled with pride. He was a man who had contact with his creator. He heard the voice of God speaking to him. He was no longer deceived by the illusion of the world system and self worship.

What is the testimony of God? God's testimony is that Jesus Christ is God's Son and that he was crucified on the cross for our sins. God's testimony is that Jesus Christ died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. Those who deny this testimony call God a liar and will give account one day for that.

Paul did not preach a message of self-help or self-improvement. He did not preach a message of positive affirmations. He did not preach a message of climbing steps of a man-made religious system. He determined that he would know nothing except one thing: Christ and Him crucified.

This is the capstone of God three in one. It is the foundation and it is the capstone of who God is. God is three in one. The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified is the revelation of who God is. It shows us that only God can take away sins, only God can heal us, only God can deliver us, only God can truly change a life. There is only one way to approach God and that is through his son Jesus Christ.

There is no message more important than the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Environmentalism, social justice, peace on earth, and everything else which man's imagination comes up with pales in significance next to this: Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross for our sins, he died, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

In the gospel every issue man struggles with is addressed. Every problem of mankind is answered in Christ and him crucified. There is no other answer for mankind except the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no religion, philosophy, or psychology which can compare to the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is all we need. When we turn away from our ideas and opinions and fix our eyes on the Savior then we will know the truth. The truth of the gospel will set us free when we behold the Lamb of God. He is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

Who was Paul afraid of? He said he was with this church "*in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling*". I don't think he was afraid of people in the church. Of all the problems Paul had I don't fear of man was one of them. This is the same man who stood before kings and testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't think Paul's fear came because he was afraid of the Corinthians.

Why was Paul afraid and trembling? I think Paul trembled because he knew the importance of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was afraid he might say or do something which would give Christians a wrong idea of what the gospel is about. Paul had a fear of God and a profound awareness that he would stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Another reason Paul trembled was because he knew what he preached would provide a foundation for their faith. Their faith would be built upon the message Paul preached to them.

More than anything he wanted to make sure their faith did not rest in the wisdom of man or in the strength of man. It is so important Christians learn from day one not to put any confidence in man or what men can do or say or preach. Men are by nature followers of other men because of pride and self worship. Therefore Paul wanted to make it clear that he was not who they should follow. Paul was not the leader. He was leading the way by pointing them to the only one they should follow and that is Jesus Christ.

This has been a growing realization for me. When I was young I was a follower of men and their ministries. After seeing first hand men I admired fail I realized I needed to put my focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Not men, churches, or ministries.

We need to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and not follow men. Men are weak and fail every time. Paul knew this and trembled before God as he pointed the Corinthians to Jesus Christ. He wanted to make sure their faith did not rest in the wisdom, philosophy, psychology, systems, or religions of men. He wanted to make sure their faith was in the only one who could save them and that is Jesus Christ.

There is only one who will never fail and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. May his kingdom come and may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

Not all wisdom is God's wisdom. I had a friend who would quote popular religious psychology books that said all truth is God's truth. These religious psychology books said to use the wisdom of the secular world in ministry. No matter how logical that sounds not all truth is God's truth. Even the devil can use the Bible to lie. Not all wisdom that is in the world is God's wisdom.

Paul described something he called "hidden wisdom". It was a wisdom he spoke about with other believers who were established in their faith in Jesus. This wisdom was completely different from the wisdom which the world system has. The wisdom of the world comes to nothing. All the pomp, power, prestige, position, and pride of the world system will one day fail. The world system is like building castles in the sand.

However, there is real wisdom which God gives those who believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Christ himself is the wisdom of God. **1 Corinthians 1:30**, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"* Real wisdom and truth is not an idea or a philosophy but a person. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. All of God's wisdom is wrapped up in the Son of God Jesus Christ.

If the world knew who Jesus was they would never have crucified him. Instead they would have bowed their knee and confessed with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Don't be distracted by the knowledge of the world. We live in the world, we interface with the world to do our job, but don't be united with the spirit in the world. The corrupt wisdom of the world is deception and delusion. It leads men astray and separates them from their creator. That is what the world system is designed to do. It enables man to meet physical needs but it destroys the spirit inside a man. God's kingdom is the opposite. It gives life to man's spirit and also takes care of his material needs as a matter of course (**Matthew 6:33**). Be careful not to get your eyes off the author and the finisher of your faith. He is God's wisdom and he is all we need.

1 Corinthians 2:9-11

The Lord does not hide from those who believe in his son Jesus Christ. He reveals himself to us as much as we can take while living in these earthly bodies. The Lord reveals himself to those who put their trust in him.

No eye has seen nor ear heard nor has it entered the imagination of man what God has prepared for those who love him. This is an exhilarating thought! The Lord is preparing something for those who love him. However, in the next breath Paul said that God revealed these things to us by his Spirit. What things?

I think what Paul is saying here is that every Spirit filled believer knows deep inside that the Lord has a good plan for them. His plans are good and not evil and this gives us hope for the future. (**Jeremiah 29:11**). Through patience and comfort of the scripture we have hope for the future. (**Romans 15:4**). The Lord goes before us just like he told his disciples. He went away in order to prepare a place for us

and he will come again to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also. This knowledge is in the heart of every born again Spirit filled believer. We know this because God revealed it to us.

We are not afraid of the future. No matter what happens on earth our future is secure in Christ. We are not fearful of what men do on earth because our life is hid with Christ in God. The Lord is in complete control of every detail of our lives. We can trust in him and not be afraid. (**Psalm 56:3**).

The Holy Spirit revealed to us the good plan God has for us. Rejoice in the Lord. All the hardship is temporary and will give way to God's kingdom.

John 16:13, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Everything we know about God was received as a gift from God. We couldn't know anything if God did not show us. This should humble us and cause us to realize that it is not the smart man or the strong man or the clever man who is commended in the kingdom of God. Instead, it is the man the Lord chooses to reveal himself to. We have received! We did not earn anything. We did not work for it. We don't deserve it. We have received from God.

We could know nothing about God unless we received the Spirit of God. No one can really understand the Bible unless the Holy Spirit lives inside him. We can only know God if the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. The Holy Spirit only lives inside the man who believes the gospel and confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. If a man does not confess this then the Holy Spirit does not live in him. If the Holy Spirit does not live in him he cannot know God or understand God. The Bible is a closed book to anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit living inside.

The Holy Spirit shows us things which God gave us. The Lord gave us many spiritual things which we can rely on every day. We received forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, salvation from sin, deliverance from the world system and the devil. These are only a few of the many things the Lord gave us.

What does it mean to compare spiritual things with spiritual? One part is to realize that the Bible interprets the Bible. Many times the meaning of a verse can only be discerned within the context of the chapter or book. A book in the Bible can only be truly understood in the context of the entire Bible. It is important to interpret scripture with scripture and not interpret scripture with secular humanistic ideas. To understand scripture we need to develop a biblical framework for thinking. This comes by applying God's word to life. It comes through obedience and doing what we know in the Bible. More understanding comes as we put into practice what we learn.

1 Corinthians 2:14-15

Paul made a distinction between the natural and spiritual man. It helps our Christian walk to understand the difference between the natural and spiritual man. Watchman Nee wrote an in-depth book on this

entitled "The Spiritual Man" which I recommend to people who want to understand what it means to be a spiritual Christian.

A Christian can believe the gospel but still continue to live in ignorance and unbelief. Some people only know enough about the Lord Jesus to know their sins are forgiven. This is the beginning and foundation. There is more that the Lord accomplished for us.

The natural man was described as the "*old man*", "*carnal man*", or the "*flesh*". Read **Ephesians 4:22-24**. Paul described the old man and the new man. The old man is the carnal man who walks in the flesh and unbelief. The new man is the one who is in Christ by faith and walks in the Spirit.

There is a distinction between unbelievers and Christians. There is also a distinction between Christians who live by the old nature and those who live by the new nature. The Christian is born again. We are taught in scripture to live in accordance with the new nature. We do this by faith in the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is a historical fact which took place in time and history. It is a spiritual fact which we can enter by faith and be united with the Lord Jesus. God himself placed us in Christ Jesus (**1 Corinthians 1:30**).

The natural man cannot know these things. He cannot understand them because he will not stand under them. He insists on creating his own righteousness, his own world view, his own opinions. He takes whatever man-made religions there are and incorporates them into his unbelieving mind.

Christians do this also. Instead of continuing in God's word they adopt psychology, philosophy, and opinions of the world system. As a result they have minimal victory over sin. This is the brother of the flesh. There is also a brother of the Spirit.

The brother of the Spirit is an overcomer. He walks in the deliverance Christ accomplished. He walks in victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. He does this by denying self and taking up his cross and following Jesus.

To walk the way Jesus did is to do everything for the glory of God. It means to live for the name of the Father and not for your own name. You deny your name, your self-life, and you live for the name of the Father just like Jesus. Jesus said everything he said and did was what he heard and saw from his Father.

This is what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. You no longer live for self. Jesus never lived for himself. He lived completely for his heavenly Father. Everything Jesus did was in obedience to his Father in heaven.

God the Father placed us in Christ. Therefore since we are in Christ we are a new creation. The old life is gone. The new life has come. Now live in the Spirit, believe the gospel every day, and keep your heart fixed on the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:16

Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit lives in us we have the mind of Christ. If we wait on the Lord and listen to him he speaks to us. He instructs and teaches us. There are many promises in scripture which show us that the Holy Spirit teaches us and God leads and guides us.

We have the mind of Christ. This has helped me many times to discern between the voice of the enemy, my own mind, and the voice of God. The Holy Spirit lives in me. I have the mind of Christ.

If I have thoughts which contradict the Bible then those thoughts are not from me or the Lord. Those are thoughts which the enemy tries to put in my head. This is the first step in recognizing the difference between the mind of Christ and the enemy. Start with the promise that you have the mind of Christ.

We must have confidence that the Lord lives in us and we are in the truth. If we do not believe we have the mind of Christ we will be confused by the voices of the enemy. We need to be confident God's truth is absolute and we do not need to submit to public opinion. The opinions of culture change over time. I have seen this in my life. I have seen the winds of public opinion change over time. People are easily deceived by what they see on TV, hear on the radio, or read on the Internet.

But we have the mind of Christ. The Lord does not change. The truth does not change. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We must stubbornly hold to the truth which never changes. The world and unbelievers malign, criticize, and mock us for holding onto the Bible. It does not matter. We have the mind of Christ. Don't let go of it! Hold fast! Read **2 Timothy 1:13-14**.

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

Paul described the Corinthians as "*babes in Christ*". They fed on milk and not solid food. Babies are unable to process meat but only drink milk. Paul said he spoke to them in baby terms.

Comparing what Paul taught to what churches today teach it seems we are still on milk. Churches call themselves by denominational names and follow men's names. They follow men's systematic theology of the Bible. This is how babes in Christ operate. They follow men.

Preaching holiness is not meat. People may assume meat is preaching against sin and exalting holiness. Those are good messages but they are not meat. The meat is Christ himself. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the meat of God's word. When people deny their name and to take the name of Christ then they have learned to eat meat.

Knowing our sins are forgiven is good but it is milk. We need to learn to live in consistent victory over sin. Milk is only laws of God and what we should or should not do. Knowing rules and the law is milk.

The meat is knowing Christ. To be healthy we learn that Jesus Christ is our living bread and our living water. We don't focus on doctrines about Christ but instead fix our heart on Christ. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. We don't want the crumbs from the table of humanistic psychology and we also do not want the crumbs from theologian's systems of religion. Instead, we want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. We want to commune with Christ himself. This is not intellectualism. This is spiritual experience with our creator and our redeemer. This is hearing the voice of God speaking to us so clearly that we can quote the exact words he said to us.

I've in the past exhausted myself studying the doctrines and systematic theology of men. I was earnest to find a framework to pin my thoughts on so I could explain the Bible to anyone. I wanted to have an answer for any question I might be asked by an unbeliever. That was good but there is only one answer that can help: Jesus died for your sins on a cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is the gospel. This is the power of God for salvation for every man who believes. Nothing else can save, forgive, and deliver us from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

When we talk about babes in Christ we may not be talking about someone only saved for a short time. There are people who were Christians most of their life but still need milk. I have known new Christians who already grasped the meat of the gospel and fed their spirit on the Lord Jesus Christ. Maturity does not depend on time; it depends on how much a man is willing to humble himself and receive revelation from the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:3-7

We have a descriptive list which defines what "carnal" means. This list includes envy, strife, and division. These characteristics manifest within the context of believers who boast of what Bible teacher they follow. Underlying this is man's natural inclination to exalt his name or follow the name of another man. Why do men exalt the names of men? To understand that we must go back to Babel. This is the heart and principle of the world system and man's independence from God.

What happens when men become independent from God? The result is that men provide for themselves, protect themselves, and find something besides God to worship.

Keep this in mind. The purpose of making a name is to create provision, protection, and purpose for men's lives. The Bible exposes this in the account of Babel. After men create a name they give power to the name by bringing numbers under the name. Create a name. Bring numbers under the name. This is the basic structure of every country, nation, corporation, and most churches. It is the spirit of the world system to exalt a name and multiply numbers. When you see this it will make the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you go back and read the encounter between Jesus and the man possessed by "Legion".

Why do men make a name? Why do men follow the name of another man? It is a result of man's natural sinful nature of rebellion against the heavenly Father, and it is because man, through unbelief, devises a system independent from God to provide for himself, protect himself, and worship self. Self-worship is the religion of unbelievers.

This is why men envy and strive against one another and divide. They multiply power through submission to a name. They also divide when individuals decide they want that power themselves. This has been going on since Cain and Abel. This is basic human nature. It is all right there in the Bible if God opens a man's eyes to see it.

Paul denied himself. He described himself as someone who was planting seeds. He described Apollos as someone who watered the seeds. However, it does not matter if we plant seeds or water seeds if God did not make the seeds grow.

See how Paul pointed back to God? This is what the Holy Spirit is trying to do with us. He is trying to get our eyes off men, off ourselves, and get our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the name of the Lord

Jesus that is written on us. God wrote his name on us. We no longer belong to ourselves, but he has purchased us with his own blood. We were brought back to God through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Christian cannot follow self or other men and still follow God. We must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is God himself who is our provision, our protection, and our portion. Have faith in God. Worship God. Do not follow self and the religion of self-worship. Repent and turn away from sin, self, the world system, and the devil. Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

1 Corinthians 3:8-11

The Lord is exclusive. There is no other foundation. What does it mean that there is no other foundation?

Paul used word pictures to describe what the Christian does and what God does. He compared the Christian worker to someone who plants seeds or waters seeds. He changed his word picture to calling a Christian worker a carpenter. He compared the Christian to a builder. He described the church as God's garden and he also compared the church to God's house. Paul was a carpenter working to help build God's house. He was not just any carpenter in this project. He was one of the first builders on the scene and was involved in pouring the concrete for the foundation of the house.

The church is a house of faith. It is invisible but nonetheless real. Paul said in this house there was only one foundation and this was the Lord Jesus Christ. To build within the church we must build on the solid rock of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus used this same word picture. Read **Luke 6:48-49**.

The Lord Jesus is the foundation. Jesus said that obedience to his word was the same as building your life on the solid rock which will endure when storms of life hit you. I have found from personal experience that what Paul and the Lord Jesus taught is absolutely true. The Lord Jesus is a solid rock foundation for life. When we build our lives on this solid rock we are not moved when tribulation and trials come. Instead, storms of life only cause us to cling even tighter to this solid rock.

God is a rewarder. Scripture teaches that the Lord is a rewarder of those who believe in him and those who seek him. Read **Hebrews 11:6**.

The Lord sees us. He hears us. He takes detailed notes on how we believe in him, trust in him, and seek him. He promises he will reward those who seek after him. Read **Matthew 6:33** and **1 Corinthians 15:58**. Don't give up. Don't be discouraged. Keep putting one foot in front of the other. The Lord will make a way.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Paul continued with the word picture of building a house upon a foundation. This spiritual house is built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone of the building. What kind of materials were used in constructing this spiritual house?

Do we use valuable materials? Do we use worthless materials? From a Bible perspective what has true value is what is eternal. What has no value is what is temporary and passing away. What has value in building the spiritual house of the Lord's church? Only God's word lasts forever. Only obedience to

God's word, and specifically the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, truly matters. Everything else is peripheral to the central issue of God's word and our obedience to God's word.

Read these verses carefully. We often get confused because we know our salvation is not accomplished through our own good works. However, these verses demonstrate a judgment of the believer's works. The only conclusion we can come to is that this judgment of works has nothing to do with our security in Christ. We are saved no matter what. Salvation is God's work. However, the reward God gives to the believer is related to how the believer lived his life. Our eternal reward and position in God's kingdom is related to our personal obedience. This is tied in with what the Lord Jesus said about building our lives upon the rock. If we apply the word of God to our lives and walk in obedience then we are building a life ("*our house*") upon a foundation which will stand under the fire of God's inspection.

Did we obey God's word? We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us walk in obedience to what we read in the Bible.

Our lives, whether lived in agreement with God or in disagreement, will be tried by the fire of God's judgment. This judgment will come in the future at a specific point in time Paul called "*the day*". He said "*the day shall declare it*". There is a day God has appointed in which men's works will be revealed by the fire of God.

When we read this we should not have a dread like the world. Instead, as Christians, we are secure in God's perfect love for us. This fear should not be a tormenting fear like what drives unbelievers. Instead, the fear of God purifies us. It removes everything which is not essential for our future life in eternity. God is preparing us for something beyond our current comprehension. Fear God and let him do the work of sanctification in us.

God's work in us is wrapped up in the finished work of Christ. Our justification, sanctification, and glorification are accomplished by our union with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. In order to see this we have to look at it from the eternal perspective instead of thinking in chronological time sequence.

The takeaway is that Christians will pass through a fire of God's judgment. This judgment is not about going to heaven or going to hell. It has nothing to do with salvation. Paul tacks on the end of these verses that "*he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*". The Holy Spirit wants every Christian to take this judgment serious. We need to live right now in view of the judgment seat of Christ. We need to fear God and walk in obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of this is by faith. All of these works spring from the fountain of faith in the Lord Jesus. It is when a man neglects the gospel that the good works dry up. Jesus said if we do not abide in him we can do nothing. We will not bear the fruit of good works if we do not continue to abide in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to remember every day: Christ died for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. God the Father placed me in Christ and united me together with him. I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me.

Walk in the truth. Remember the truth. Don't be moved away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we stay in the word and stay in prayer then our lives will bear the fruit of God's kingdom. By God's grace we will one day hear the Lord say to us: "*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*"

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Temples are mentioned in the Bible. Before Israel had a temple they had a tent which they carried on their shoulders through the wilderness and in the promised land. When David became king he wanted to build a structure for God's tabernacle. He wanted to make a permanent home for the ark of the covenant. God did not allow David to do this but he did allow David's son Solomon to build a temple with the materials and resources which David stored up. This temple stood for a long time until it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Eventually Israel returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile and rebuilt the temple again during the time of Nehemiah and Ezra.

The temple that was in existence during the time of Jesus was a structure which was mostly restored and built by the Gentile king Herod.

Until the time Jesus arrived temples were always outward structures made of stone and wood and precious metals.

However, things changed when the Lord Jesus appeared. Jesus made the statement that the temple would be destroyed and he would rebuild it in three days. The temple which Jesus spoke of was not the physical structure that King Herod built but rather his own body. Jesus changed the definition of what "temple" meant to refer to his own body instead of an outward physical building.

This changed everything. From this point when we talk about a temple in the New Testament it is talking about the physical body of the Christian. The body of each individual Christian is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Christians collectively as the church are the temple of God. We should no longer think of man-made buildings as a temple of God. The temple of God in the New Testament is believers as individuals and as a group. The temple of God, the church, is people, and not man-made buildings.

After we have this fixed in our mind let's read these scriptures again. We are the temple of God. The Holy Spirit lives in each Christian. He abides in each individual believer and also all Christians collected together as the church. We are the temple of God. Right after Paul made this statement he issued a strong warning. He said that anyone who destroyed God's temple that God would in turn destroy him. What did that mean?

I'm sure there are a lot of applications which can be made from these verses. People use these verses to teach Christians to stay away from smoking, drinking and overeating. But is that what Paul was talking about? What is the context of what Paul was saying?

We just finished reading the previous verses where Paul compared the church to being God's garden and also a house built upon a foundation. He said that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the house. He warned us that we will give an account to God on judgment day for how we built our lives, and also the church, on this foundation. We need to be careful with what materials we use in building this temple.

I think the primary thrust of what Paul said was that we should be careful about what we teach, preach, and disseminate as truth to other Christians in the church. It is easy to get side tracked into false doctrine or if not in outright false doctrine it is easy to get distracted by minor points and neglect the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul said we can be guilty of destroying God's temple in our service. That is pretty heavy to think about. Paul said if anyone destroyed God's temple that God himself would destroy him. Anyone who participates in ministry within the church should take this to heart.

This does not only apply to those who work full time in ministry because from a biblical point of view every single Christian is in ministry. Every Christian is responsible for using their God-given gifts and talents for the edification, comfort, and exhortation of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need to be careful that what we say and do is for the purpose of building the church and not tearing it down. If anyone tears down God's people then God himself will intervene. You do not want to be found hurting God's people in any fashion.

This is why we need to humble ourselves and be wise in the way we interact with people. We need to take our words, attitude, and actions serious and not be careless. Our goal is to build Christians up and not tear them down.

We can tear people down with a prideful attitude. We can hurt people indirectly by having a worldly attitude of position, prestige, and pride. When we act like this and live like this we are not helping the body of Christ but we are hurting people. God cannot use anyone who is controlled by a worldly attitude but he will instead oppose you. God will bring discipline and correction to bear on anyone who walks in pride and disobedience.

When Paul said "*God will destroy*" he was not really talking about correction, though. He said God will put an end to anyone who hurts his people. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Remember Achan.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

We deceive ourselves because we think like the world around us. Being wise according to a worldly framework of logic makes men foolish. Why? Because he spends his life on what is temporary and fading away. He tries to satisfy the hunger in his soul by eating and drinking what does not satisfy. This world system does not fill the soul. The world system can only temporarily provide for what is external. This wisdom of putting self first is what the world system teaches us. However, this wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

The Lord Jesus taught us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other needs would be met by God. God takes care of small details in creation such as grass of the field and birds of the air. Of how much more value are we than grass and birds?

Worldly thinking is vain because it is based on illusions, deceptions, and a mirage. Ultimately all man's building is swept away by time. The universe is disintegrating and so will all of man's efforts at satisfying his desire for provision, protection, and self-worship.

Men who follow the attitude of the world boast in men. They exalt the names of men. They follow after the personalities of men. They would rather believe a philosophical system which men created rather than the gospel truth in the Bible.

Christians should not boast in men. This is what the world does. God gave men like Paul and Apollos so we could have our attention pointed to the only one who can satisfy our soul. His name is Jesus. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. He will return to this earth one day. He will establish his kingdom which will last forever.

1 Corinthians Chapter 4

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

It is required of those who have the responsibility of stewardship to be faithful. I learned this is what God expects from me. He wants me to be faithful. He does not expect me to save the world. He doesn't expect me to change lives. He wants me to be faithful.

Every Christian is a minister of Christ. We are called by the Lord to be faithful with whatever gift or talent we have. We are responsible for doing our part.

My heart's desire is to be faithful in what God gives me. Each day I want my goal to be faithful. I want to hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant." That is my life's goal.

Faithfulness is not something we are born with. Men are born selfish and unfaithful. We are born thinking only of our needs. Our goal when we met the Lord was for our self. That was all we knew.

As a Christian I am no longer serving myself. God has called me to serve him and this is the best life anyone can have on earth. There is no better life than as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Matthew 25:21**.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5

Paul stood before judges and kings and used it as an opportunity to preach the gospel. He shared his testimony of how the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. I agree with Paul that it was a small thing to him if people judged him. For Paul it was another opportunity to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this context the Corinthians compared Paul with Apollos. By necessity when people compare others they will judge people. The Lord Jesus warned us about judging people like this. With the measure we use on others it will be measured to us. We always lose when we judge people.

Paul encouraged them not to judge him or Apollos. It was not because he cared personally but because it was not good for the Corinthians to engage in this. Instead, he encouraged them to wait for the return of the Lord to judge the secrets of men's hearts. On that day believers will receive each one their own reward and praise from God. Until then we don't have enough information to be able to formulate a correct judgment about anyone.

How many times are the actions of others misinterpreted? All the time! Humans are not good judges, because we exaggerate or minimize what others do. We acquit murderers and turn around and penalize people who exercise their conscience.

Let's determine to leave all judging to the Lord. Let us judge nothing before the time.

1 Corinthians 4:6-8

What did Paul mean '*ye have reigned as kings*'? Paul was describing a position of authority. He was saying Christians have a position of authority. Because the Corinthians boasted of the names of men Paul knew they didn't get it. They did not understand who they were in Christ. Their thinking was still formed around the framework of the world system. The world system is based on the names of men.

God's kingdom is based on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. God revealed his name to Moses: '*I Am That I Am*'. He is the great I Am. There is none like him.

Men are deceived by the illusion of making a name and multiplying numbers under a name. They believe this method is their provision, protection, and purpose. It may provide for temporary things but at a terrible price. The price is the soul of everyone who sells themselves to the world system. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Everyone who buys into the world system will lose his soul.

Paul taught the Corinthians that he and Apollos were gifts which God gave them for the purpose of edification, exhortation, and comfort. These men were not to be turned into idols. If we become followers after the names of men then we no longer follow the Lord Jesus. We must learn to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.

Following Jesus means we live as he did. He only said and did what he heard from his Father and what he saw his Father doing. We can know what the heavenly Father says and what he does by reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon God's word. Also we must get shut into our prayer closet with the Lord. We must commune with the Lord. We must eat the bread of life and drink the living waters. Christ must be our life. Abide in him, let his words abide in you. Stand every day in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do have a position of authority. Our authority right now is to lay down our lives. Our authority right now is to serve and walk in humility. Our authority right now is to lose our life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. Our authority is to present ourselves to God every day to be a living sacrifice. If we are faithful now then in the kingdom we will reign with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not be deceived by men who walk in pride, prestige, and position. Do not be deceived by psychology, philosophy, and man-made religions. Stay in the word and stay in prayer. Stay with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 4:9-14

Paul's idea of greatness was much different than the Corinthians. Why did Paul describe all the problems, challenges, and troubles he endured? We should put his biographical entry in context. The underlying problem he spoke to with the Corinthians was their tendency to exalt men. How does the

world exalt men? How are men promoted? Men are exalted by financial success and by avoiding suffering. The world praises men who do well for themselves. However, the apostolic resume Paul gave does not line up with the world's idea of greatness. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians this?

He described his life because he was trying to shatter their delusion about what makes men great. These Corinthians were enamored with men's names. They desired to be followers of great men. So Paul told them apostles suffer. They are weak. They are despised. They go around hungry and thirsty and naked. They are reviled, persecuted, and suffer. They are defamed and made the filth of the world. Paul said apostles are treated as the off scouring of the world. Why did Paul tell them this? What were apostles? They were men God chose to carry the message but God has no interest in exalting men. This work was completely divorced from pride, prestige, and position. In God's kingdom there is only one name which is exalted and this is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other name.

When he said he was weak but they were strong he was trying to help them understand they had a different value system than what a Christian should have. He said he was weak and they were strong. This must have been holy sarcasm. Paul was teaching them this value system of exalting men is the complete opposite of the kingdom of God. In God's kingdom men are not lifted up. Only the Lord Jesus is lifted up.

He completed this section by saying he did not want them to be ashamed. He was not trying to shame them. Instead, he was trying to warn them that their way of thinking was not according to truth and was not a Christian framework for thinking.

1 Corinthians 4:15-21

When we get to these verses if we are not careful we might think Paul was contradicting himself. He just finished saying not to lift up the names of men such as Apollos and Paul. Then he turned around and told the Corinthians to follow him?

Paul was not promoting himself. He was not telling them to follow him personally. He was not telling them to submit to his (Paul's) name. Instead, he just pointed out what he had experienced as an apostle. He was telling them to follow his example of suffering for the gospel and for Jesus Christ. It was Paul's example we should emulate not the man himself. No servant of God wants followers for the sake of having followers. Paul urged them to follow him in the sense of following his teaching, his example, and his lifestyle of denying self, taking up the cross, and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

There are many people who teach the Bible. Many Bible instructors. However, Paul considered himself their father in the faith. He was not just a Bible teacher. He was ready to lay down his life for their sake and had already laid down his life for them and other churches. This is the difference between an instructor and a father. A spiritual father is ready to lay down his life for those God brings into his life to serve.

Speaking of fathers Paul now mentioned his son in the faith Timothy whom he was sending to them. Paul wanted Timothy to go to the Corinthians and remind them of what Paul taught them. This demonstrated how important it is we continue to repeat the message of the gospel over and over. People need to hear it until it sinks into them and becomes the framework for their thinking. We need to teach the gospel until it grabs hold on the spirit, mind, and soul and does the work of bringing eternal life. God's word does not return void. It will accomplish the purpose God sent it. We need to be faithful to

proclaim God's word. The most important message in the Bible is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Notice Paul only had one message. He said he preached the same message in every church he went to. This was the focus and steadfastness which we need to aspire to. We need to have our spirit and mind saturated with the gospel. We need to learn how the gospel applies to the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, and the power of the gospel over the world system and the devil. We need to learn who we are in Christ Jesus. We need to know that God himself placed us in Christ. This is God's work from first to last. We need to stand securely and abide always on the sacred ground of the completed and finished work of Christ.

Paul had serious opposition in the Corinthian church. He said he would go to the Corinthian church and find out who could walk their talk. There were people talking but God's kingdom is not about talk but about God's power. It is interesting that Paul gave them the choice of how he related to them. I get the feeling that Paul did not want to be harsh but was willing to do whatever he needed to in order to secure them in the gospel. He was ready to confront if that was what it took even though he didn't really want to resort to that.

Be ready to endure whatever we have to. Most people will not hear the gospel or believe the gospel. Most people will look down their nose at the Bible believing gospel preaching Christian. Be prepared to endure that attitude from unbelievers and fake Christians. Be willing to accept the cost and pay the price of following Jesus all the way.

1 Corinthians Chapter 5

1 Corinthians 5:1

Fornication was reported in the Corinthian church. The news of sin in the church was well known by other churches and by the general public.

Churches generate a reputation in their community for good or bad. What made matters worse was that the sin in the Corinthian church was of a nature not common among unbelievers. They had sin in the church and it was heinous to unbelievers. How could they hope to be a witness for God with this in the middle of the church? They could not and so Paul had to confront them.

Churches can be weak when confronting sin among members. It is hard for men to confront sin in other's lives. It is a necessary job especially for those whose full time job is to watch over the church.

There are pastors incapable of performing this duty. Obviously overseers at the Corinthian church were unable to deal with the problem. They were puffed up about this? What does this mean? They were proud of this? I don't think they were proud of the sin. I think they were proud of how loving and gracious they were by tolerating it. This is a subtle deception of the devil. Men justify being lazy and cowards by boasting about how merciful and tolerant they are.

In this situation tolerance was not the answer. Tolerance is not always the correct response. Is tolerance the answer when a wolf is eating sheep? Is tolerance the answer when a bear is carrying off children? Is tolerance the answer when a lion is in the street killing people? To allow sin in the church is to let loose

the wolf, the bear, and the lion. I know King David would not stand for it. He took the bear by the beard and killed him.

There is a season and time for everything. It takes wisdom from God to know when to apply mercy and tolerance. It takes wisdom from God to know when to stand up and resist evil doers. Tolerance at the wrong time in the wrong context is deadly.

In the Corinthian church tolerance of this man's sin was deadly. Paul would not stand by and let it go. He hit the problem head on by putting his finger on the sin and condemning it right away. He scolded them soundly with this letter.

Every problem has its own solution and there are different tools to fix what is broken. Be sure you know how to use all the tools in God's word to deal with any situation which may arise in your life and also in the lives of those you care about.

1 Corinthians 5:2-5

Paul was with them in his heart. His letter was an extension of himself. His heart was with them, and whether he was there with them or not his authority among them still applied. Here we are 2,000 years later and Paul is still with us, too.

Delivering someone to Satan meant the man committing the sin would no longer be allowed to enjoy the provision and protection of church. This was serious business. Communities were built around the synagogue and early Christians needed the Christian community in a practical way. Being put outside the fellowship of a church was like what it feels like today to get fired from a job. It had a big impact.

Churches are still supposed to deal with these situations. However, it probably has less impact on the individual today other than bruising the pride of the offender. Most people today would just go down the street to another church and continue like nothing happened.

To be outside the protection of the church is indeed to be prey to the enemy. We need brothers and sisters in Christ to watch our blind spots. We need interaction, correction, and encouragement. Without this interaction with other Christians we become more vulnerable to deception.

The destruction of the flesh did not mean the destruction of the physical body but rather the destruction of the "flesh" in a spiritual sense. Paul used the word "flesh" to describe the selfish attitude of men. It is the attitude of self-worship and self-love which characterized unbelievers. This is what Paul wanted to see destroyed in this man's life. This man needed to open his eyes and realize his sin was not only affecting him but also people around him. Sin always makes us focus on ourselves. When we repent we begin to think about others instead of our own self.

Notice this process was not intended to bring permanent damage to the man. Even if he was no longer able to benefit from the community directly no doubt the Corinthians would still keep up with him. This man did not lose salvation. It was Paul's goal to make sure he would place his focus back on his relationship with God and work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

I don't think many churches get this right. It is easy to go to one extreme or the other in dealing with people. Some people, like the Corinthians, decided to tolerate the sin. Others are zealous in the other

direction and set up elaborate traps for people to get thrown out of ministry. All these extremes are unbiblical.

Remember this process takes wisdom from God. There are no hard rules in dealing with people. We need to make sure we stay humble and constantly examine our motives in what we are doing to people.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Evidently the Corinthians boasted about how tolerant they were to the man who was in open sin. Paul rebuked them. He said their "glorying" was not good. This boasting was not a good thing. Have you ever heard someone boast of how tolerant they are of people who are in open sin?

Paul used the analogy of leaven and bread to make his point that even a little bit of sin in the church can change everyone in the church. I've seen this before at churches I attended when I was a young Christian. I saw how individuals could wield influence even though on the surface it was not seen but years later the rotten fruit was exposed.

This principle of one person affecting an entire group is demonstrated by example in the Old Testament. The account in Joshua of Achan's sin and its consequences teach us this principle. When we commit sin we do not just hurt ourselves. We affect everyone around us.

The consequences of sin is always death. People die in different ways and not only physically. Relationships die. Opportunities are missed. Friendships sour. Blessings God planned for us can be forfeited by not dealing with sin in our lives.

This is important when it comes to protecting the church. The church cannot function if there is sin in the camp. If there are people in the church who live in open sin it has an affect on the congregation. Sin must be dealt with.

The Corinthians deceived themselves that they were good Christians by tolerating this open sin in the church. Paul told them they were wrong. It is never the right thing to tolerate open sin in the church. It must be dealt with. If it is not removed it will leaven the congregation.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

We should not associate with people who claim to be a Christian but who live in open and unrepentant sin. Why is this? One reason is because of the damage done to the reputation of the church. Not only that but there is real spiritual damage to people in the church who tolerate someone who claims to be a Christian but lives like this.

Paul expanded the list of sins to watch out for to include not only fornication but also covetousness, idolatry, railing, alcoholism, and extortion. Some of these are hard to pin down for people today who do not know what the Bible teaches.

The rule of thumb is to avoid people who claim to be Christians but do not live according to their profession. Jesus said we can know false prophets by their bad fruit. Paul encouraged Christians to use discernment and judge people by their actions. This was not hypocritical judgment like what Jesus

rebuked people for. Christians are called to exercise righteous judgment especially when it comes to protecting the church.

I like how Paul pointed out the obvious that he did not mean to exclude unbelievers because then you would have to leave the world. Unbelievers are not as much danger to the church. It is people who claim to be Christians but live like unbelievers which are a real danger. Jesus called these people "hypocrites". He rebuked the religious leaders. They claimed to know God but by their works they denied him.

Another reason this is serious is because it stops people from getting saved. The church is the instrument God uses to preach the gospel. People are smart enough to know that if people who claim to be Christians live like them or worse then what they preach has no value. This is why I suspect Paul rebuked the fortune teller woman who followed them. He did not want people to confuse the gospel with fortune tellers and give Christians that kind of reputation.

Just because a person claims to be a Christian does not make him one. Paul said we should put out of the church any wicked person especially if they claim to be a Christian.

1 Corinthians Chapter 6

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

The Corinthian Christians fought with one another to the point of going to secular courts. They allowed unbelieving judges to make decisions for them.

Paul's last point seems like the strongest point he made on this issue. "*Why do ye not rather take wrong?*" This question points back to the words of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek. Jesus taught us that if someone took our coat then give them our shirt as well. For the sake of the gospel we are willing to lose whatever material goods we have. If someone takes advantage of us then the correct response is what Jesus taught. As Christians we want to have a biblical attitude, right? Sadly, many don't care about responding with a Biblical attitude to situations like this. Like the Corinthians they want their stuff. They want revenge. They want justice even if it means getting unbelievers involved to settle a dispute between "brothers".

Paul went through a series of logical suggestions to them which would be more preferable than secular courts. We have some holy sarcasm from Paul when he asked them if there was not someone "wise" enough in their church to settle disputes.

While Paul was dealing with the issue at hand he also mentioned other extraordinary information which surprised me. I don't know if this little bit of information is anywhere else in the Bible. Christians will judge angels? Christians will judge the world?

We have little idea of what will happen in the future for Christians. I wonder how many Christians even know this information about the future? I've read the Bible many times and this information barely registered in my mind until right now. It is incredible what God has planned for us in the future. We really cannot comprehend the good plan which the Lord has in store for us. Let's be glad for all that God has planned for us.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

How are the righteous and unrighteous separated? How can you tell the righteous from the wicked? Paul gave us a short list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. The point was simple. People who live like the devil will not inherit God's kingdom.

This list included fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. I get the feeling this list is not exhaustive but is only a sample to help us understand that there are clear indications which can be easily identified that mark someone as not inheriting God's kingdom. Live like one of those in this list and you can forget about God's kingdom.

Why did Paul tell them not to be deceived? Because they were on the road to deception by accepting a man's sin in their church. They patted themselves on the back at being merciful. They did not understand that this man's sin was a cancer in the church. It was a disease. People who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. By allowing them to continue in sin we don't do them any favors. By not confronting sin we hurt people.

The most selfish and unloving thing we can do is avoid rebuking brothers in Christ who are in open sin. It is our duty to reprove, rebuke, and exhort our brothers with all long suffering and doctrine.

Don't be deceived into thinking one is spiritual when tolerating the sins of others. If they call themselves a Christian there is only one standard for living. Read **1 Peter 1:15-16**. Don't be deceived by people who tolerate compromise in the lives of other people. If they tolerate sin it is because they also are living in compromise and hidden sin. Don't be deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing.

1 Corinthians 6:12

If we look at this verse in context with the previous verses and what follows I see this verse pertaining to man's knowledge of good and evil. Men exercise rights to take others to court and exact justice against people. This is the wisdom of the world. It is how people in the world operate. Paul said that a Christian does not live according to the knowledge of good and evil. Everything is lawful for the Christian but not everything is good for us.

He said to the Corinthians that they were free to exercise legal rights in a court of law. They were free to live in any way they pleased. Christ set us free. However, are we then to use this freedom in Christ to live like people in the world system?

All things are lawful for me, he says. But not everything is good for me. If I start living according to this attitude in the world of good and evil then I will be ensnared by this thinking. It is much better to live according to the Holy Spirit and suffer injustice against one's own self. It is much better for the Christian to fly over the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon the wings of the Spirit of God. If we deny self and surrender our righteousness then God will enable us to live a completely different life than those who are trapped in the world system.

Those who demand their rights and justify themselves live according to the principles of the world system which originate in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Many people are deceived into thinking the world is divided into good and evil but it is not. Satan is not an equal with God. He is a

created being. There is no contest between good and evil. The Lord is good and he will destroy what is evil when he completes his plan in allowing it.

There is no real contest of good versus evil. There is only the Lord. He is a real person. A Christian is not a man who tries to do good. He is not trying to quit sin. He does not sin because he is living in the power of the Spirit. He does what is right because he is living in the power of the Spirit. It is not a moral question between right and wrong. He is living by the life of God. This far exceeds and surpasses men's ideas of what is lawful. All things are lawful. But I will live according to the Spirit.

We will not be brought under the power of this world system and its ideas of right and wrong. We live under the Lord Jesus Christ which far surpasses any law this world can come up with.

1 Corinthians 6:13-20

A false doctrine was that what a man did with his body did not matter as a Christian. The Lord is involved with us on every level. Serving the Lord is not merely a spiritual experience but is affected by what we do with the body. Paul tied this in with the issue of sexual immorality. Paul's taught that fornication directly impacts our relationship with the Lord.

Paul's exhortation was to "*flee fornication*". This sin is deadly to Christians. We need to be careful to live a pure and holy life. In today's world this is difficult as we are bombarded by sexual immorality through media. It takes a concentrated effort to avoid what will cause us to be snared by sexual immorality. It is our duty to live a clean and pure life. The Lord will help us to live a clean life. We can pray and ask for his help. We can pray and ask for the spiritual strength and resolve to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Sexual immorality is devastating to the Christian's walk with the Lord. It provides the enemy with much opportunity to destroy our faith and to bring condemnation upon us.

The body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy spirit lives inside of us. We need to respect the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life and not disrespect our temple. We have a duty to present our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices.

We have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are no longer our own. We should glorify God in our body and in our spirit.

1 Corinthians Chapter 7

1 Corinthians 7:1-2

One of the practical ways Paul taught the church to remove sexual immorality was for people to get married. He taught them that in order to avoid fornication a man should have a wife and every woman have her own husband. From this we see God's plan for the sexual relationship is within marriage. God's plan is for a man and a woman to be married. Our culture today perverts what God taught in the Bible.

Christians should follow what the Bible teaches. When I hear so-called "Christians" following the ideas of culture on marriage it makes me cringe. I understand why unbelievers or non-Christians are deceived by propaganda but Christians should know better.

We need to return to the word of God on issues like marriage. The Lord created a man and a woman and joined them together in marriage. This is the pattern in the Bible. We do not see any other pattern in scripture for marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:3-9

Don't misunderstand Paul as teaching the main purpose in marriage is merely to avoid fornication. He is focusing, instead, upon problems this church experienced. He taught them that sexual relations within marriage was the answer to problems they had.

In marriage the spouse should be sensitive to the needs of the other. The only reason married people abstain from sexual relations is for time to fast and pray. However, this should not go on continuously because it will give the enemy an opportunity to tempt people.

Paul revealed something about himself. He said he had a gift of remaining single with no necessity for sexual relations. This was a spiritual gift given to Paul by the Lord so that Paul could fulfill his ministry. Not everyone in the church has the same gift or calling. Each person has a different ministry and a different gift in the church. The majority of people will get married.

Some think the word "burn" refers to hell but I think it refers to sexual passion. It is better for people to get married rather than burn with passion. These verses show how practical the word of God is in providing instructions for living the Christian life. The Lord does not leave anything out in teaching us how to live.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

Paul emphasized this command to stay married was not only from him but was from the Lord Jesus. If we read the gospel accounts we know Jesus taught us that spouses should not divorce. Divorce is the result of hardhearted people. What God joined together let no man put asunder.

When a couple is married it is for life. Now, Paul also taught if a woman separated from her husband that she should not get remarried but look for a possibility of being reconciled. Why would he speak this to the wife? I think it was to take into account verbal or physical abuse against the wife from the husband. There was an allowance made for a wife to separate from her husband, and I believe those situations are when a wife's life is in danger. Or when she is verbally or physically abused.

God hates divorce. Divorce is almost always a result of selfish people who will not compromise and learn to live with another person. Divorce is devastating, whether or not people realize it, and it also wounds people around them. There really is no healing from divorce except God's grace. The suffering from divorce lingers for a lifetime. I have seen this in my family when my parents were divorced. The scars last a lifetime.

God hates divorce. It is the complete opposite of his plan for mankind. It destroys God's image in people. It robs people of life. It twists the mind and makes a person emotionally unstable and rips away at whatever spiritual life a person has. God hates it because divorce brings death.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

Paul addressed another question from the Corinthians. The question was whether a Christian should stay married to an unbelieving spouse. Should they separate or divorce from an unbeliever. We know the Lord hates divorce. I'm thinking this question was more in the category of separating from someone. Paul said if the unbelieving spouse wanted to continue living with the Christian then the Christian should not leave them. However, if the unbelieving spouse did leave we should let them go their way. Paul said the Christian is called to peace.

This situation might arise when two people who were not Christian got married and then later one became a Christian. It would be difficult to maintain this relationship. Christians and unbelievers have two different goals in life. They walk down two different and opposite roads.

As Christians we should not walk away from people. Instead, we continue to serve the Lord and people around us choose the Lord or go their way. I've seen this happen in my life. If you serve the Lord with all your heart people will separate from you. Read **Luke 6:22-23**.

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

You can live for God where you are. Paul taught that no matter where we are we can live for the Lord Jesus. God called us where we are. We don't have to go to Bible college to serve the Lord Jesus. Some may think in-depth Bible education is needed before they can serve the Lord. The truth is that a brand new Christian with little knowledge of the Bible can serve the Lord.

He said Jews did not need to become Gentiles to be Christians. Gentiles did not need to become Jews to be a Christian. There were slaves who became Christians. Paul told them if they got an opportunity to be free take it. However, they should not let their status as a slave prevent them from serving God where they were. No matter where we are we can serve God. The lowliest employee to the highest executive can serve the Lord where they are.

We see examples in the Bible. Nehemiah was the king's cup bearer and he was faithful in his job. As opportunity came he went to Jerusalem. He helped establish Israel back in Jerusalem. Also, Daniel was a prisoner of war but served God faithfully. He was promoted to a high position in the Babylonian and Persian empires. Joseph was sold into slavery but served God faithfully in every situation. One day he became the prince of Egypt.

We need to learn to be faithful where we are. We need to learn to serve God in our daily life where God called us. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking there is greener grass somewhere. It is my firm conviction God looks for men who will be faithful where they are. We should live as we are called.

1 Corinthians 7:25-28

During the time of distress when Paul wrote this letter he advised people who were not married to not seek a wife. This seemed to contradict what he said earlier that people should get married rather than burn. However, this is a different context. Always be careful of what context you are in. Paul said

because they lived in a time of "distress" that life would be much harder for Christians who were married. Perhaps it was a time of persecution. Perhaps families were in danger of being torn apart by persecution. In that kind of situation it was easier to endure if a man was single and unattached. There would be less suffering. He said those who married would face "trouble in the flesh" and I can only assume he meant because of the persecution of Christians.

This was an example of the Bible speaking specifically to a particular time. We can also learn a biblical principle here. The principle is that there is a time and season for everything. There will be times in church history when there will be persecution. During those times men and women who marry face a harder time. Paul admonished us that if we are married we should not seek to be loosed from our spouse even during difficult times. Marriage is sacred.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Paul repeated what the apostle John taught in First John. The world is passing away. What does this mean? We currently live in a world system that is temporary. It will not last. I'm not talking about tall buildings or city infrastructure. I'm talking about the principles on which men build civilization is passing away. Fallen men in union with the serpent create a civilization which attempts to be separate and independent from God. It is based on self-worship rather than on the worship of the one true God.

Paul taught us to remember this present world order is passing away. Christians should not make the goal of their life this temporary world system. The goal of the unbeliever is self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. This is the opposite of the born again Christian. For the born again Spirit filled Christian his life goal is Jesus. The Lord is our provision, he is our protector, and he is our prize. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong to him. We are one with him.

Those who live in unbelief and do not abide in God are living for what is temporary and passing away. Paul taught us not to hold on to the world. Remember Lot's wife. She loved what she had in the world system of Sodom and Gomorrah and looked back with longing to what God had judged to be destroyed. God has judged this world and it will pass away. We should not long for the things of this world and we should not make the goal of our life this present world. Our goal is eternity. Our hope is rooted in what is eternal. We can let go of the temporary because we are investing in what is eternal and will last forever. Read **1 John 2:15-17**.

1 Corinthians 7:32-40

I see where religions based on Christianity get the idea that men in ministry should not be married. However, I do not think Paul was putting down marriage. A man who is not married is not necessarily more dedicated to the Lord or more spiritual. A man who is married is not necessarily less spiritual or less dedicated. The point Paul made was a practical observation. Married men have a responsibility to take care of their wives and will devote energy toward that. There is no sin in this. The same is true for wives. Husbands and wives spend their life taking care of one another. This does not make them less committed to the Lord or less spiritual.

It does mean their attention is divided. They simply have less time in the day to devote to the Lord's work. A single person has the advantage of being able to serve the Lord with all their time. They have freedom to do things married people cannot do.

I did not understand this when I was a young Christian. Before I was married I read these scriptures and thought I would be less of a Christian if I got married. Eventually the Lord did bless me with a wonderful wife. Over time I discovered I grew much closer to the Lord as a married man than I would ever have as a single man.

After I was married I never went back to serving God in full time ministry for very long. Many times my wife and I tried to serve the Lord at various ministries full time but it did not work. We needed finances or medical insurance which we just could not get at ministries. I discovered what Paul said in these verses was true.

Did that make me less spiritual or less of a Christian? No, it was just a simple fact of life. We cannot do everything. We have to make decisions in life on how we will serve God. There is nothing wrong with serving God as a single man or serving God as a married man. However, one cannot do both. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. We need to continue in the calling the Lord gave us.

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

1 Corinthians 8:1

This chapter is about eating food offered to idols. This was a problem in Paul's day. Paul's teaching was that Christians should not allow it to bother their conscience if they eat meat offered to idols. It is just meat. Paul said some Christians who had a past history of eating meat offered to idols would be offended by this. They were not strong enough in their faith in the gospel. To observe another Christian eating meat offered to idols would stumble them. It would tempt them to go back to idol worship. Paul taught that even if someone had knowledge that eating meat was OK they should abstain if there was a brother who would be offended. The rule of thumb for Christians is always love.

The question is what do we live by? Do we live by our knowledge of right and wrong or do we live by love. This is the difference between Christians who are carnal and those who live by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to do what is best for others. He will lead us to deny ourselves. We may want to eat meat because we know it doesn't matter if it was offered to an idol. But will we endanger another Christian by doing this? Will another Christian be tempted to go back to idol worship?

This is also covered by Paul in Romans chapter 14 and 15. A spiritual Christian lives according to love. This love prevents him from doing anything which offends other Christians. Preach grace and preach freedom but don't stumble those who are weak. Don't offend those who are still entangled by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

1 Corinthians 8:2-3

Paul said "*knowledge puffeth up*". The knowledge he talks about is the freedom Christians have to eat meat. We are free to eat meat even if it was offered to idols. We are not adversely affected spiritually by eating meat. Christians do not live under Old Testament rules concerning clean and unclean food. We should not be bothered by food that was used in a religious ceremony.

Paul warned this knowledge of our freedom can lead to pride. If we insist on our freedoms we can hurt people. This is a subtle distinction Paul made. It is true we are free but we are not free to hurt the faith of others. We are not free to offend people.

The result of knowledge is pride. This principle holds true not only in the context of Christian liberty concerning food and drink. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was where man fell into sin. Unbelievers put emphasis on knowledge. Most of the world system is built on the principle of attaining levels of worldly knowledge.

What is the result of love? What is the result of putting others before one's own self? What is the result of thinking about the welfare of others and acting according to this principle?

Paul said the man who loves God is known by God. When we live according to the Holy Spirit we will love God and love people. We will deny ourselves and live to serve. We will be faithful and good servants of the Lord.

It is my goal to be known by the Lord. It is my goal to hear him say on judgment day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

Paul addressed the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols. He made it clear that for Christians all food is clean. It is clean even if it was used in some pagan religious ceremony. For the Christian all foods are clean. There are no rules for what a Christian can or cannot eat. All of the dietary laws given to the nation of Israel were done away when Christ fulfilled the law in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul acknowledged that pagans follow things they call gods or lords. But for those who know the truth of the gospel there is only one God, the Father, and his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. He also links the Lord Jesus Christ as God by saying "*Jesus Christ, by whom whom are all things*". God is three in one: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is Israel, the church, and the kingdom. He was, and is, and is to come, God three in one.

1 Corinthians 8:7-13

Christians should be sensitive to those around them and always live in such a way that the weakest man will not be offended by the way we live. Not every Christian understands their freedom from rules so those who do know their freedom should live in such a way not to offend those who are confused. Living according to the love of Christ is the new rule we live by. Sometimes this means we submit to unreasonable situations in order not to offend those who are oppressed.

At other times we might live like unbelievers because they are not offended by our lack of religious rules. Paul said he became like those without law to win those who were not under the law. He became all things to all people so he could win people to Christ. (**1 Corinthians 9:22**).

Remember the goal is to be an ambassador for Christ. The goal is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The goal is to live in such a way that unbelievers will be drawn to Christ. We live in such a way that those who are weak in faith can be stronger. In every situation we live in a way that no one will be offended. People will be offended, though. Some people look for reasons to be offended in order to justify unbelief or hatred. They find reasons to justify selfishness.

In those cases there is not much we can do. As much as it lies with us let us strive to live in peace with others. (**Psalm 120:7**)

1 Corinthians Chapter 9

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. What does it mean to live of the gospel? I think in the context Paul meant those who preach the gospel should be supported financially for their work. The ones who support them materially should be the ones who benefit from their spiritual work. This was also repeated by Paul in **Galatians 6:6**.

Why did Paul address this? Because there were people in the Corinthian church who challenged Paul's credentials as an apostle. Paul did not receive material support from them and on this basis people accused him of not being legitimate. This is a worldly attitude to think a man is not legitimate because he does not receive money. Unbelievers are convinced that a man's worth is tied to making money.

Before Paul explained to them why he didn't receive financial support he agreed that men who labor in the ministry should be supported. Gospel preachers should be supported materially for the work. As we read the next verses we find out why Paul did not receive financial support from this particular church.

Paul's proof that he was an apostle rested on the fact that this church was founded through his ministry. They were the proof of his apostleship. This is better proof of ministry. The proof is in the lives that are brought into God's Kingdom. Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians that they were his joy and crown when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This taught me that my investment in this life on earth should be in the lives of people. I should be investing in people by sharing God's word and living a lifestyle which makes it difficult for people to discredit the gospel.

Paul used the Old Testament law of not muzzling an ox when it treads out the grain to make his point. This shows us Paul's method of using scripture in his teaching and instructing. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for instruction and training others in right living. (**2 Timothy 3:16**).

Paul told them he did not receive financial support because he did not want to hinder the preaching of the gospel. He did not want people to have the idea he preached for money. This was why many times Paul worked and labored vocationally while he preached the gospel. He was sensitive to people and did not want to give people the wrong idea about his motive in ministry. Despite his care to avoid misunderstanding people still made false accusations against Paul. Sometimes it does not matter how hard we try to do what is right people will still assign false motives to our actions and words. This is why it is important we live before God and do not have a fear of man.

We cannot stop men from thinking evil of us but we need to always be concerned about what the Lord thinks about us. If we live for God we can have a clear conscience and can have great confidence in our lives that no matter what people think about us that we lived an honest life.

1 Corinthians 9:15-17

The Lord called Paul to preach the gospel. Paul said he would preach the gospel regardless of whether or not anyone supported his ministry. The Lord gave him the job and he said there was a woe on him if

he did not preach the gospel. He knew if he preached with a willing heart the Lord would reward him and if he did not preach with a willing heart he still could not walk away from God's calling on his life.

Paul said it was right for the people in the church to support their preacher. It was right for Christians to support ministries that preach the gospel. However, Paul said he did not ask for support from the Corinthian church because he felt it would give them occasion to accuse him of false motives. He did everything he could to prove he was sincere.

Paul did not write this letter to ask the Corinthians for financial support. He wrote this letter to show them how much he loved them despite their false accusations and the sin in their church. He wanted them to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ loved them.

My takeaway is to be faithful to represent the gospel in life and speech. I am to live for the Lord Jesus and do everything I can to convince others by my actions and words that I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me.

1 Corinthians 9:18-23

Paul did not want anyone to be hindered in hearing the preaching of the gospel. As a result he never asked for people to financially support him. There were people and churches who did support Paul but this was not Paul's goal in ministry. His goal was to obey the Lord Jesus, preach the gospel, and do everything possible to make it easy for anyone to hear and believe the gospel.

Paul adapted himself to whatever circumstances he was in so people could understand and believe the gospel. When he was around unbelievers or Gentiles he adapted himself to that situation. He did not put on a religious front but he was himself and preached the gospel in plain fashion. When he was with religious Jewish people he adapted himself to that situation as well. No matter who he was ministering to he adapted himself for the sake of the gospel.

Some may use these verses to justify living like unbelievers but that is not what Paul said. Paul never compromised the message of the gospel. He didn't get piercings, tattoos, or drink a beer with the guys in order to win people to Christ. Instead, he simplified his life and made sure everyone understood he was sincere and without ulterior motive in his message.

Being all things to all people does not mean Paul compromised the gospel or his life of holiness to the Lord. Jesus never sinned yet he sat down to eat with sinners so they could come to the saving knowledge of the gospel.

We can do the same in the power of the Holy Spirit. We should not be afraid to go anywhere or speak to anyone about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Make sure your heart is right and you are doing it in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Paul was not talking about salvation. He was not talking about heaven or hell in these verses. If we put these verses into the context of salvation then we will come away with the idea that we have to work for salvation. We might think our salvation was dependent on our ability to bring our body under subjection.

Paul was not talking about eternal life or salvation. This does not mean what he said was not important to the Christian. There will come a day when every Christian will stand before the Lord and be rewarded for his service. There is the real possibility of losing rewards that we might have had if we had been faithful. This is a real and serious truth we need to consider and take to heart.

When Paul said he was concerned about being a castaway it was clear that a man can be in ministry, preach the gospel, and yet still lose rewards. How is this possible? It can happen if that man lives carelessly. If he does not live a faithful, consistent, and steadfast life he can lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

I have grown to have a fear of God in this respect. I can say with Paul that I do not want to be a castaway. In this sense a castaway is someone who enters heaven but does not receive the rewards which were planned for him.

We have a short time on this earth to prepare for the kingdom of God. We need to seriously consider how we are investing for eternity. Are we only living for the here and now and throwing our lives away? Or, are we serving the Lord Jesus Christ where he put us?

Let us be diligent to have a mind set upon things above. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let us invest in what will count now and for eternity. Let us live with our heart set upon the Lord Jesus Christ who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

1 Corinthians Chapter 10

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Paul's doctrine of Christ was not limited to the New Testament. By revelation from the Holy Spirit Paul saw the Lord Jesus in the midst of Israel when they were in the wilderness. He said that Christ was their spiritual meat and their spiritual drink. The spiritual Rock that followed Israel and from which they drank. That Rock was Christ!

The Lord Jesus was with Israel. He is their Lord, He is their King, He is their Provider, Protector, and He is their Portion. From this we see the church existed within Israel. For those who had spiritual eyes to see what Paul was talking about here they were the church. The true believers in Israel were the church. And then Paul said in Galatians 6 that the church is the true Israel. In both instances Paul was talking about that holy remnant of believers who existed in Israel and those who exist today in the church. The church was not the outward structure constructed by men with brick and wood, but it was the people who truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. There was always this holy remnant from the beginning who composed the people of God. There are three parts to the people of God: Israel, church, and the kingdom during the millennium. In each of these parts God takes a remnant to comprise the overcomers. Those whom God not only called but also chose to be his holy remnant. These are the true believers the Lord has made promises to.

We want to be in that group. We want to believe the gospel every day and we want to cling to this Rock every day. We want to eat this spiritual meat and drink this spiritual water every day. He is our life. We cannot live spiritually apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Doctrine cannot do this for us. Knowing

systematic theology cannot do this for us. We must know HIM! We must touch the Lord every day. If we fail in this nothing else will matter in the end. If we get out of touch with the Lord then everything we put our hand to will be wood, hay, and stubble. It will be burned away at the judgment seat of Christ. The only thing which will endure was what was produced through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our work today is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our work today is to abide in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said if we abide in his word then we are his disciples indeed and we will know the truth and it will set us free.

Let God's word sink deep in your heart and set you free from fear, unbelief, and doubt. Let it set you free from self-worship and idolatry. Let it set you free so that you no longer count your life dear to yourself but are prepared to lay down your life for the gospel and for the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the promise: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1 Corinthians 10:5-12

"Many of them" means most of them. Most of the people who came out of Egypt never entered the Promised Land but died in the wilderness. It was not God's plan for them to die in the wilderness, but they died because they failed to believe God's word. He spoke to them through supernatural acts and signs and through Moses who gave them God's word. They did not believe the signs and they did not believe the word of God. They died in the wilderness.

They lusted after evil things, they were idolaters, they committed fornication, and they tempted Christ. Most of the items in this list are easily understood, but what does it mean to "tempt Christ"? God gave manna from heaven, he gave water out of a rock. He parted the Red Sea. After all that they still didn't believe in God. They asked if God could spread a table in the wilderness. This continual unbelief when God had proven himself was in essence *"tempting Christ"*. They were asking God to punish them when they persisted in unbelief.

Unbelief is dangerous. To hear God's word and turn away brings terrible consequences in a person's life. When we turn away from the truth we automatically embrace lies. The father of all lies is the devil. Turning away from the Bible, God, and Jesus is the same as inviting Satan into a person's life. It is automatic. There is no in-between. We are on the Lord's side all the way or we are on the devil's side. Those who are on the devil's side are blind and do not comprehend that through their self-worship and self-adoration that they are in principle a devil-worshiper.

Paul said these things were written in the Bible so we could see there is a cause and effect relationship in the universe. God created us and the world around us in such a way that if we violate God's moral law and live for self then we will reap consequences for that decision. We will reap death, regret, sorrow, and mourning. We will reap loneliness, isolation, and a feeling of being cut off from people. This is the beginning of what hell will feel like through all eternity for those who live for self and ignore God.

When we think we are standing let us take heed. It is easy to slip, to back slide, and to ignore God's word. It is easy to get busy and forget to commune with the Lord Jesus. As surely as God's word is true if we ignore our relationship with the Lord Jesus we will die spiritually. We will wither up and lose our spiritual power and will have no strength to resist temptations the world throws at us.

The only hope we have to overcome temptation is to stay in God's word, walk in the Spirit, and communicate with the Lord Jesus every day.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Temptation is inevitable. It is built-in to the life of every Christian to face temptation. These temptations come from within us and from without. We must learn to overcome temptation. We must learn how to say "no" to temptation.

First principle is realize we are not alone. Temptations we face today were already faced by a multitude of others. We walk the same road many walked before us. Whatever I suffer others are suffering around the world. We learn from in **1 Peter 5:9**, "*Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*" We have brothers and sisters around the world who suffer and endure and overcome the same temptations we face. Never think you are the only one or that your case is special. This will help to overcome the first problem with temptation: self-pity. Self-pity is a door to self-worship, and self-worship is giving in to the principle of sin and Satan.

These temptations are common. Following this first principle is the truth that God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. A good example is the suffering and patience of Job. An entire book in the Bible was devoted to showing us how to endure temptation. Job is our example of patience in temptation. "*Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*" (**James 5:11**). Enduring temptation teaches us about God's compassion. When a man does not endure his temptation then his heart becomes bitter against the Lord. He will get bitter. The Lord withdraws his grace from anyone who shakes their fist at him. For the man who endures the trial and maintains humility the Lord will have compassion.

The Lord does not allow anything in our lives beyond our endurance. This is his promise. He will put nothing in our life that will damage us. We might not believe that but it is plain in this Bible verse that God holds a leash on circumstances, on the devil, and he will help us keep our flesh under subjection.

When temptation comes then the Lord makes a way to escape from it. We must seize on this opportunity to escape. There are good examples in the Bible. Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. Job humbled himself before God. Daniel purposed in his heart not to eat the king's food and found a way to maintain his integrity as a prisoner of war.

The spirit is willing but many times the flesh is weak. This is why we must continue to stay in God's word and continue in prayer. We cannot allow ourselves a day without touching the Lord Jesus in prayer and Bible study. We must draw near to God and he will draw near to us. We cannot neglect so great a salvation. We must not allow ourselves to forget the gospel for a day: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. When we stand on this sacred ground of the finished work of Christ we will find the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to say "NO" to temptation and say "YES" to Jesus every time.

We can bear the trial. We can overcome the temptation. The Lord gave his promise in his word. We must decide to stand by faith on God's word and not give in to unbelief. We must confess God's truth to our heart and to others. It is through faith we overcome this world and temptations.

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Idolatry is poison for anyone but is especially heinous for Christians to participate in idolatry. Idolatry in modern culture is more sophisticated and subtle. Unless we understand the underlying principles of why people participate in idolatry we will be hard pressed to flee from it in our modern world.

At the heart of idolatry is self-worship. People light candles and incense and pray to statues because they desire provision, protection, or intervention. People are taught even the most satanic forms of idolatry and that is trusting self, worshiping self, and loving self. Self equals sin and sin equals Satan. These are all the same in spiritual principle. When we love self we are devil-worshippers. This is why Jesus told his followers that unless a man denies himself he cannot be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Only someone who is dead to self can truly worship God. We cannot die to self, however, unless we are united together with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. God the Father does this for us when we put our faith in the gospel. When we believe in the Lord Jesus and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ then God the Father places us into his Son. When we are united together with the Lord Jesus we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

So why would Paul warn these Christians to flee idolatry? That is simple. People are ignorant and full of pride. I've seen Christians, myself included, not only fail to resist temptation but actually run right into the arms of temptation. Our hearts are filled with folly but the Lord's rod of correction will drive it out of us. He will allow us to make mistakes, failures, and wallow in this miry pit until we get sick and tired of it. We will never be happy in sin as a Christian. We will be miserable. There is no pleasure in sin for the Spirit filled Christian. Eventually we remember it is much better in our Father's house even if we can just be a doorkeeper in his house.

We cannot live in agreement with the devil and stay in agreement with the Lord. One or the other must go. If we have known the Lord I believe we will always eventually choose to let go of idolatry. We will turn our heart back to the Lord. We may go astray but the good shepherd will seek us out. He will not allow one sheep to go astray. He will seek us and find us. He is the good shepherd of our souls. Thank the Lord Jesus for his faithfulness.

Don't think you can walk in agreement with idolatry and get away with it. We are not stronger than the Lord. No matter how strong we think we are or how proud we will always suffer if we disobey the Lord. If we agree with God's enemies we will suffer. It doesn't mean God stops loving us. The Lord will never stop loving us. But he will discipline us, that is for sure, and we will wish we had just listened and obeyed him. It is much better to humble our heart, listen to God, and obey what he says to us.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

Perhaps one reason people avoid becoming a Christian is that they think they will be forced to follow rules which will make their life unhappy. This could not be further from the truth. A true Christian is set free from rules, laws, and moral codes. A Christian does not follow a list of rules. Instead, a Christian is someone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ.

All things are lawful for the Christian. A Christian is not under religious laws. However, this does not mean a Christian will want live in such a way to hurt himself or anyone else.

We should live according to the principle of love. This means we do not live for self. We live for God. Living for God means loving him and loving others more than we love ourselves.

Natural, unbelieving man loves self first. A Christian knows he no longer lives for himself but for Jesus. Our life is now bound to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am glad for this. There is no one I would rather be bound to than the Lord Jesus Christ.

All things may be lawful but all things are not good. We are free to live using wisdom God gives to us. With that comes the responsibility of living a good life. Our goal is to hear the Lord say on that day, "*Well done good and faithful servant*".

1 Corinthians 10:25-31

Paul addressed concerns about eating certain kinds of foods and also foods which were used in pagan religious ceremonies.

The New Testament makes it clear that Christians are under no obligation to follow Jewish dietary laws. Not only that but we shouldn't be concerned about where our food has been or what it was used for. We are free to eat food and not worry about it. We pray, give thanks, and then eat. However, the exception to this is when other people might be offended.

Our rule of thumb is to do everything for the glory of God. In eating and drinking we must ask ourselves: "Does this glorify God?" If we are hurting people then we are not glorifying God. Our goal is to please God and also to live at peace with our brother.

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Paul's conclusion was that we live to please all men, including Jews, Gentiles, and the church. His goal was not to profit himself but to profit other people so they could be saved.

Here we have three groups of people who are all still with us to this day. We have the Jews, we have Gentiles, and we have the church.

The Lord used Israel to record the written word of God. God has used Gentiles as nation builders. The Lord used the church as ambassadors and intercessors. Each one has a part in God's plan.

The church is made of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus as Messiah. We believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. The Lord Jesus will return to establish his Kingdom on this earth. This will fulfill God's promises to Israel as far as an earthly kingdom for Israel. Jerusalem will be the center of this new world order.

We have always had Gentiles or the nations. However, during the coming Kingdom Age I see the Lord takes another remnant from the nations. This group will be those who flee to Jerusalem at the end of the thousand years when Satan is released. Satan leads the majority of the nations in one last battle against Jerusalem.

So we have Israel, the church, and the nations. These are three days, or three periods of time, in which God reveals himself to the world. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and through the nations. This also corresponds with the roles of prophet, priest, and king.

God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and the nations.

Look at the Ark of the Covenant. Within the tabernacle we see the Tablets of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of hidden manna. Here we have the symbols that represent Israel, the church, and the kingdom. God is three in one.

1 Corinthians Chapter 11

1 Corinthians 11:1

Was Paul trying to get people to follow him? Or was he telling people to imitate how he followed Christ? There is a subtle distinction in how people read this verse. Some people read this verse and think Paul was recruiting people to follow him personally because he was a spiritual giant and could be trusted with their spiritual walk. Or was he teaching people to put into practice the gospel which he taught them? Was he trying to get people to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way he followed the Lord Jesus Christ? Did Paul say we should follow his example of how he followed Christ? Or was Paul trying to get a personal following of Christians who would come underneath him and look to him as their leader? I think we can dismiss the interpretation that Paul tried to get people to follow him personally on the basis of earlier chapters in this letter.

Paul preached against men building personal followings. He warned Christians not to follow the names of men but instead follow Christ. Paul told them he would not build a name for himself. He was not trying to build a following by baptizing people in his own name. Instead, Paul was called to preach the gospel, and the gospel is about teaching men individually to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've personally known a ministry leader who took this scripture out of context. I was once interviewed for a job in ministry and the man asked me if I would follow him as long as he followed Christ. At the time I did not discern how dangerous this man was or how messed up his thought process was. This is the kind of thinking men have who build cults.

We should not be slaves to men. Instead, each Christian is responsible to follow the Lord Jesus Christ for himself. We are each accountable to God for our obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Men who teach this scripture in such a way as to force others to submit to them or obey them are abusing the scripture and will be held accountable for it.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping "ordinances" that he delivered to them. What were these ordinances? As we see in the following verses these ordinances were about relationships between men, women, the church, with Christ and God. This passage is difficult to follow and for that reason many people develop different interpretations. Some people say these verses teach women to wear a covering in church. Some people teach this is about men's authority over women. Then we have the discussion

between women having long hair and men having short hair. In the middle of this Paul said: *"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels"*!

I'm not going to pretend I understand all of what Paul said here. I'll skip down to verse 16 where he said "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

I married into a family that was once Amish and Mennonite. These former Mennonites go straight to this verse when the subject of head coverings comes up. Basically, they take this to mean that Paul is not enforcing an ordinance for women to wear head coverings.

I agree with this. I think it is a strange tradition that women are forced to wear head coverings. However, I do not think this is an essential which would cause me to break fellowship with brothers and sisters who are Mennonite or Amish. Those who have come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are my brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

In the first half of this chapter we read that Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping certain ordinances, but here he said he did not praise them and he listed why. He listed division, heresies, and men grabbing position for prestige.

Why do people seek position? Why do people want to make a name for themselves? Ultimately it is for the purpose of provision and protection. There is an emotional reward in the feeling of prestige and power over people. That feeling evaporates quickly when the reality of the problems those people represent come crashing down! I have certainly felt that responsibility before.

I think it is interesting that Paul stated that there must be heresies among them since there were people who were in the process of recruiting others to approve of them. This approval is for the purpose of elevating one's own self in order to gain power over others. Why would anyone seek to do this in the church? What is the purpose of exalting one's own self to a position?

The root of seeking position is provision, protection, and for the confirmation of one's own self as a leader. Each man seeks to make himself the leader of others. When he attains this there is a carnal satisfaction. It is short lived. It is temporary. This desire for position, prestige, and power is only temporary. Men cannot seem to help themselves. They are slaves to this delusion. Men must worship and if they will not worship the living God in Christ Jesus then they automatically worship self. Worshiping self is the same thing as devil worship. Worshiping self is worshiping Satan. Loving self is loving the devil and submitting to the devil's idea of how the universe should exist.

The most important thing we can do is repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil and turn our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We must denounce self and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who is worthy of all glory, and honor, and praise.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

Paul pulled back the cover of this church and gave us a glimpse into a meeting where people did not care about each another. People were getting drunk. Other people were hungry. What was this? This is a

picture of the world of unbelievers where some people go to bed hungry and others party the night away. Paul asked "*Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*"

I wonder if we ever consider that the Lord knows exactly what people do in the church. Do we stop and consider that the Lord listens to us when we whisper in someone's ear. Do we think that the Lord knows exactly what we do in his house? The eyes of the Lord are upon us and his ears are open. What are we doing? What are we saying? My hope and prayer is that the Lord will say to me one day, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*".

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Many churches have the words "*In Remembrance Of Me*" engraved on a communion table at the front of the building. In most communion services the Pastor will quote these words. I think it is interesting that these precious words are in the middle of Paul rebuking the Corinthian church. How is it possible that something so precious can be right in the middle of Paul rebuking Christians for their drunkenness and disarray in observance of communion?

I think this is often the case. I know it has been for me. Right in the middle of my worst moments in life the Lord Jesus shows up. This merciful Savior appears right in the middle of my worst moments when everything feels like it is spinning out of control.

When I was a young man I had moments when I thought I would lose my life. The Lord Jesus would appear out of nowhere and hold my hand. He would not let me go. He held my hand and walked with me through the chaos. He hasn't changed. I have learned to not be afraid of the darkness or chaos that comes crashing on me at times.

Why? Because Jesus is in the boat with me. He may appear to be asleep but he is not. He doesn't have to rebuke me anymore for not having faith. I keep my eyes on him because I have learned to trust in the Lord. I have learned he is my provider, protector, and portion. I will trust and not be afraid. And that is all he wants from me. He wants me to confess my faith in him.

I do this in remembrance of him today. I remember his body was broken for me. I remember his blood was spilled for me. Jesus died for my sins, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again the third day. This is all that matters. Eternity hinges on these events. Here I stand quietly on this sacred ground of the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ my Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:27-34

Paul's rebuke was profound because it revealed why people suffer and die needlessly. People do not take the holiness of God seriously. They do not show proper respect for the things of God. Communion is a time that should be sober. Yet these Christians in Corinth were careless with the things of God. I am reminded of how a man died because he stretched out his hand to steady a cart which carried the Ark of God.

We need to show proper respect and fear of God. We need to consider how we approach the Lord. Today we can draw near to God with confidence because of what Christ did for us. We can draw near with confidence that the Lord hears our prayers. He hears our prayer of confession. When we come to

God through the Lord Jesus Christ he hears us. The Lord freely forgives and washes and cleanses us from all our sins.

However, there is an attitude like the Corinthians had. There is an attitude of being careless, unthankful, and taking things for granted. This attitude reminds me of Samson. Samson was blessed by God, chosen by God, and walked in the anointing of God. But he took it for granted. He did not appreciate God's grace toward him. He did not walk worthy of his calling.

We need to be careful to humble our hearts. We need to thank the Lord. We need to take the things of God serious. Don't be careless with the Lord. Don't be careless with the things of God. Instead, let us walk with reverence toward the Lord and cultivate the fear of God in our heart. Our God is a consuming fire.

1 Corinthians Chapter 12

1 Corinthians 12:1

The Corinthians knew about spiritual gifts but did not understand how spiritual gifts operated in church. They did not understand the purpose God gave spiritual gifts.

Paul instructed them on the purpose and use of spiritual gifts. He provided a list of spiritual gifts. I have no reason to think this is an exhaustive list of every spiritual gift God could give but it is what the Corinthians experienced by that time.

We don't want to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. I've attended churches which embraced the use of spiritual gifts during church services but were ignorant regarding the purpose and use of spiritual gifts. I've been in other churches where the gifts were never used during a church service but the people were taught correctly about spiritual gifts, their purpose, and their use. And I've been in churches where the gifts were never used, were not taught, and were even mocked. You can get a mixture of all these attitudes in various churches.

I think the modern church would benefit from teaching on spiritual gifts. The Lord gave the church spiritual gifts for a reason. He wants us to use spiritual gifts for the purpose he gave them.

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build and edify the church. Spiritual gifts and the men God uses to exercise these gifts should have a heart of love for the church. It is God's desire to build the church into a holy, pure temple. We are like stones built together. We comprise a holy temple for the Lord. My prayer is that the Lord will make this temple holy and pure and without any blemish.

May the Lord help us overcome ignorance in regard to spiritual gifts. May the Lord help us understand spiritual gifts, their purpose, and how we should exercise spiritual gifts in church.

1 Corinthians 12:2-3

The early Christians understood that men can speak words through spiritual influence. When they were in bondage to idols some of them spoke by the influence of evil spirits. Now that they were Christians Paul said they spoke by the Holy Spirit. However, perhaps some of the people coming and going through this church said blasphemous things while pretending they were under the influence of the

Holy Spirit. Paul taught them basic discernment. No one who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit will blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ. When someone blasphemes the Lord Jesus Christ then they are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit but some other spirit entirely.

Also, we find a word of encouragement here that when someone confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is a good way to discern by what spirit someone is speaking.

It is important to listen closely to what people say. Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Sometimes you can listen to someone preaching and what they say might sound OK. They might quote a Bible verse now and then. But all of a sudden they will say something coarse, or vulgar, or they might cuss. What spirit is influencing a person like that? Certainly not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not curse and does not tell coarse jokes. That would completely contradict the written word of God.

If we pay attention to the Bible we can learn about exercising discernment when it comes to spiritual gifts. Paul gave us discernment for when someone speaks. What do they say? Do they preach the gospel? Do they proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord? **1 Corinthians 12:4-7.**

Paul taught us there are diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and diversities of operations. Why did he teach this?

If we look at this letter as a whole we can see the Corinthians had a problem with division. Paul was trying to bring them together and get their focus off self and onto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amazing as it is men can divide over such things as spiritual gifts, the operation of those gifts, or the different administrations in churches. All these are historical reasons for church splits and divisions despite the fact Paul addressed these issues in the first century to this church.

How is this possible? It is possible because men do not study the Bible. They do not learn from the mistakes of these Corinthians. They do not listen to Paul's correction here.

There is a reason why the Holy Spirit gave us the Bible. He did not want the church to be divided over such things as spiritual gifts, administrations, or operations.

We are taught that behind each gift is the Holy Spirit, behind each administration the same Lord, and behind each operation the same God. The Lord God works in different people to build the church into what he wants.

The church belongs to the Lord Jesus and not to us. Why do men try to exert control over churches? It is human pride and vain glory.

The church belongs to the Lord. We should humble ourselves and learn what part the Lord wants us to do in helping the church.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

Let's put these spiritual gifts in a list: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discerning of spirits. Is this an exhaustive list? I doubt it. I think this was probably examples which the Corinthian church experienced. These were probably spiritual gifts that church needed at that time. I'm not saying these spiritual gifts are no longer active in today's church. I think today's modern church is in desperate need of spiritual gifts.

What are these gifts? Men have written books on these gifts and there are probably a lot of opinions on what each gift means or how it is used. My thought is that people probably are used by God with these gifts and don't realize it most of the time.

For example the word of wisdom. I think people receive wisdom and do not realize it is supernatural. They just get an insight and act on it and never consider it again.

This could be said for some of the other gifts. Perhaps people do realize something is supernatural when a miracle happens. I think these gifts happen most of the time in a simple manner. As I heard a preacher say one time: "*supernatural in a natural way*". In other words, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to himself.

I was saved in a Pentecostal ministry when I was a young man. I believe in the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit but I've seen a lot of churches filled with phony people doing fake stuff too. After awhile it becomes tiresome and I was hungry for God's word. I was hungry for real instruction from God's word instead of emotionalism or showmanship.

Notice Paul kept repeating "*same Spirit*". Why did he say this? Perhaps because Paul did not want people to think because they were used by God that they were more special than the man exhorting his brother with a word of wisdom. All the gifts are from the Holy Spirit. No gift is more special or significant than another. A man who lays healing hands on a brother is no more a spiritual giant than the lady serving casserole for potluck dinner.

We need to keep this in perspective. People get uptight when supernatural events take place. We are not required to fall down, pass out, or start shouting when the Lord moves in our midst. We can worship the Lord with grateful hearts and lift our hands in praise to Jesus. No need to perform or get hysterical.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Paul emphasized while listing the spiritual gifts that these gifts were given by the same Spirit. He repeated this. Perhaps he repeated this because he was underlining unity. He did not want the Corinthians to divide over who had the best gift. Now he expanded on the idea of unity in the church and pointed out that even though there are a lot of different people in the church we are one body.

This word picture of the human body is interesting. Paul taught how the human body has many parts but all parts make one body. He used this illustration to teach unity in the church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. I think if we wrap our mind around this idea it will astonish us to see how deplorable denominations, divisions, and schisms in the church are. People accept denominations as a matter of fact and that is just how it is. I do not believe that is how God designed the church. It is that way because of sin and the hardness of the hearts of men.

One of the greatest divisions between people in Paul's day was the division between Jews and Gentiles. Another division was between those who were slaves and those who were free. Notice Paul used these groups to illustrate how different the church is from the world. The world is separated along ethnic, religious, and social lines. But that is not true in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the body of Christ there is no division between Jews, Gentiles, slaves, or free men. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed and all things have become new. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

In the church there is one baptism. This baptism is in one Spirit and in one body. There is only one baptism, one Spirit, and one body. In the true church there is no division between people.

1 Corinthians 12:15-26

I've heard sermons on this before and almost always the message urges people toward unity. The message always seems to be trying to force people to hold hands and get along with one another. I don't think that is what Paul said here. I don't think he wished for unity in the church in these verses. No, it seems he was stating that in the body of Christ there is no schism. There is no division in the body of Christ. But wait a minute! Look around! There are divisions everywhere! But maybe, just maybe what we are looking at is not the church God is looking at?

Man looks on the outward appearance. We see the surface layer. We don't see the inward side. We don't see the heart like God sees the heart. What Paul described was something that did not have any schism. It was a body that was put together with no division in it. This was not something to aspire to. This was something that existed.

Within this outward structure of what we call the "church" there exists a spiritual body of believers which comprise the body of Jesus Christ. These people are held together by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and they have received one baptism, and they are parts of one body. The true body and the true church within the outward church is invisible to us but God sees it.

It is this invisible spiritual bride of Christ that goes up at the rapture. They will be caught up together to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. And they will live forever with the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees he quoted scripture from the Old Testament that they knew. However, when he quoted it he would apply it to what was at hand at that moment. In other words the scripture canon which ended with Malachi was currently active for Jesus. None of it had become obsolete or out of date. Even though the "book was closed" with Malachi Jesus quoted it with authority and in a present tense.

Bible teachers have lost the present tense of scripture. They think when Paul mentioned apostles that was only for the early church. No! A resounding no.

The Bible is active today. This scripture is present tense active with us today. He did not say that there were apostles in the church. Paul said in this scripture that "God hath set some in the church". This does not indicate something that was done and is now over and no longer applies to us today. No, God hath

set. This is not just for the early church. This is not just for the early disciples. This is for us right now today. Jesus is here right now with us, right? Or when the canon was closed 2,000 years ago did Jesus also leave us? Is Jesus irrelevant? My thought is that theologians who teach apostles and prophets no longer exist are in the same category as the Pharisees and Saduccees.

Jesus has not changed. The church has not changed. The scripture has not changed.

I think it is ironic that those who oppose spiritual gifts in the church today use this last verse in this chapter to teach that apostles, prophets, and spiritual gifts are passed away. Now we know a "more excellent way" and everything Paul said previous to this verse no longer applies to us today. Blind guides! False teachers.

Everything in scripture is for us today. Apostles, prophets, teachers, those who do miracles, those who heal people, those who help, those who govern, and those who speak in tongues. All of this is for today. It has always been this way for the true church: the body of believers who have always been and always will be forever.

1 Corinthians Chapter 13

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

The word '*charity*' in old English is similar to our current English word '*love*'. The word '*love*' is abused in modern culture but in this chapter we have a biblical definition of the word '*love*'.

If we carefully review the point Paul made in the previous chapter we understand why he was now talking about love in this chapter. He was not talking about love because he dismissed the spiritual gifts. Instead, he talked about love because this was what brought unity to the church. Love within the boundaries of truth is what we need for unity in the church. Paul taught that behind every spiritual gift is the same Spirit. He taught that behind every part of the body there was one body. He taught that God set men in the church as gifts. Behind all the gifts and administrations and parts there was one God. This one God is our unity. He is God three in one.

Now Paul continued with his emphasis on unity by demonstrating that beyond spiritual gifts and administrations that the goal of the Christian is love. All the spiritual gifts are for the purpose of building up the body of Christ in love. If we do not understand the goal of spiritual gifts then the gifts mean nothing. If we do not understand the goal of each part of the body of Christ is love then what is the use? Without this goal of love nothing matters. The ultimate goal is for this temple of Christ to be built in love.

The spiritual gifts and administrations are not so that men can build their names. This is a worldly attitude. The goal of spiritual gifts was so we could build the church in love. Love is the goal of the Christian. Love is the mark and quality of the Christian. Years ago I read a book by Francis Schaeffer on this topic, "The Mark Of The Christian", and I recommend it.

Paul did not deny the tongues of men and angels. He said, however, that unless we understand the purpose of the gifts is love then spiritual gifts do not profit. The goal of prophecy and knowledge and faith is so we can love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is so we can love one

another as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. This is the purpose of spiritual gifts and administrations.

This is why I feel it is grievous when men use the supernatural to build their names and collect money. It is grievous because it is the opposite of love: it is selfishness and covetousness and pride. It is like the enemy to use God's gifts for the opposite purpose for which they were designed. God's gifts are so that we can build up the church in love and in truth.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

My question is this: has knowledge passed away? If it has then I can accept that tongues has ceased. But knowledge has not passed away. Neither has tongues. God still gives people the gift of speaking in tongues. So what did Paul teach here? What is the Holy Spirit saying?

There will come a day when tongues and knowledge and prophecies will no longer be needed. We will be in the presence of God in his kingdom and there will be no need for spiritual gifts. The work of building the church will be complete. The bride and the groom will be together. Biblical love will prevail.

What is love? The Bible describes love in these verses. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not have any pride. Love is courteous and respectful. Love is not interested in self. Love is not easily provoked to anger. Love does not assume evil of others. Love does not rejoice in sin, but rejoices in the truth. It bears under burdens, it believes the best of others, it hopes the best for others, and endures the burdens of others. Love never fails.

The biblical love defined in this chapter will not fail. The Lord will not fail. He will return for his bride. The bride of the Lord Jesus Christ will be raptured. We will rise and meet the Lord in the air and so we will ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

1 Corinthians 13:9-13

These concluding verses affirm my conclusion that what this chapter teaches is that when we are with God in his kingdom there will no longer be any need for spiritual gifts. Paul compared our Christian experience as being like a child. However, when we receive our resurrection body and see the Lord we will be grown up. There will no longer be a need for what we had when we were a child. Is Paul implying spiritual gifts are childish? No, of course not! However, in comparison to the glory of being in the presence of God our spiritual gifts which we have now will pale in comparison. Paul pointed to this future in God's presence when he says "*...then shall I know even as also I am known*".

Faith, hope, charity. Why is charity the greatest? In God's kingdom we will no longer need faith or hope. We will have what we were hoping for. We will have what we only perceive now by faith. But love will endure forever. We will always love the Lord and love one another.

1 Corinthians Chapter 14

1 Corinthians 14:1

Why should we prophesy? We can take this word 'prophesy' and use our modern word 'preaching' here. Why would I rather preach God's word than speak in tongues?

That is an easy question to answer. The most important thing is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls. There is really no question that the most important thing the church does is preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pursue love because that is the goal. We love the Lord and we love one another. The spiritual gifts are for building up the church in love. We should seek the gift of preaching because this is a gift which keeps us in God's word and in the gospel.

Desire spiritual gifts. We should pray and ask the Lord to give us the spiritual gift he wants to give so we can be effective in building the church in love. We cannot be effective in ministry in our strength or natural talent. Natural talent and ability will not profit the church. We need people who are filled with the Holy Ghost and power in the church. We need men who will preach under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit it will shut the mouth of the religious Pharisees and make the heart of common men glad. Let us pray the Lord will send us revival. Who knows what the Lord will do if we pray, right?

1 Corinthians 14:2

Calvary Chapel teaches that speaking in tongues will not be interpreted as a message from God to the church. Instead any interpretation of someone speaking in tongues will be praise to God. It is not a message for the church but rather praise toward God.

I assume that the problem Calvary Chapel is trying to solve by interpreting this verse in that manner is that if anyone can speak in tongues in church and interpret those tongues then we have an open door for an enemy to give messages to a church. However, if tongues could only be speaking to God then the interpretation will always be praise and worship toward God. In other words, anyone who speaks in tongues is praising and worshiping God. From this perspective there would never be an interpretation of tongues as a message from God. I'm guessing that Calvary Chapel hopes this will cut the legs out from under any mischief from an evil spirit coming into a church. Evil spirits can speak in tongues and then give an interpretation as if it was a message from God to a church.

Do people in Pentecostal churches know if an interpretation of tongues is from God? Some might assume this is why Pentecostal and charismatic churches are leavened with the false prosperity gospel. Do Pentecostal Christians have discernment when supernatural things happen in their churches? People need to interpret the supernatural with the Bible. The Bible is our protection from deception in matters of the supernatural.

1 Corinthians 14:3

"Prophesying" is not necessarily the same thing as "preaching". Preaching has the idea of teaching with exhortation. Prophesying is similar but also carries the sense of proclaiming an immediate message to God's people. This may include specific information about something approaching the lives of those people.

The goal of prophesying is "*edification, exhortation, and comfort*". This means the prophet builds the church, encourages the church, and also comforts the church. Anyone who makes statements in the church which tears down the church, discourages the church, and brings ungodly fear in the church

should not be listened to. There are people in the last days who proclaim various messages in the church. The messages do not edify, exhort, or comfort the church. If we remember this verse it will help to know what is of God and what is from man or the devil.

If we are in a situation where God can use us to bless others it is good to keep this instruction in mind. Remember we are called to build, exhort, and comfort. All these elements need to be in ministry. Don't just rebuke people and leave them. Come alongside others, listen to them, and share the word of God with them as we have opportunity. We don't want to be found standing over anyone, but instead we want to walk alongside our brother or sister in Christ. We want to build others up, we want to encourage, and we want to comfort others in their faith.

The world is bent on tearing us down. We need to be bent on building the church and helping others to stand by faith in God's word.

1 Corinthians 14:4

The word "*edifieth*" means to build up. This is not building up in a negative sense. Some people may read this and think that Paul presented a contrast between bad and good. It is bad to edify self; it is good to edify church. Actually it is good to build one's own self in the faith. The Bible actually commands us to build ourselves up in the faith. Read **Jude 1:20**.

There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues in your devotional life for the purpose of spiritual edification. In verse 18 Paul told the Corinthians that he spoke in tongues more than them all! Why did Paul speak in tongues? He spoke in tongues in his prayer time with the Lord for the purpose of spiritual edification. This spiritual gift enables the believer to draw near to God in a unique and special way. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. Paul was not putting down the practice of speaking in tongues.

In the context of a church meeting he said the gift of prophesying was better for building the church. In the context of a church meeting the gift of prophesying is the superior gift. In the context of private devotions speaking in tongues is to edify the believer. Two different contexts. One is better in one context; the other is better in the other context.

Our goal as a growing Christian is to participate in building the church in love. One great gift for this goal is to prophesy because this will edify, exhort, and comfort our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If we hear someone taking these scriptures and minimizing speaking in tongues we know right away the person does not know how to study or teach the Bible. Paul's purpose was not to minimize speaking in tongues, but was to teach us the proper context for the use of spiritual gifts. Everything was to be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:5-13

It is important to repeat something several times and use different examples. Paul was a good teacher. The Holy Spirit teaches like this. Sometimes, because of my lack of attention, the Lord teaches me something three or four times before I realize I should be taking notes.

Paul said there was nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. He said he wanted them all to speak in tongues. However, in the context of church meetings, it is preferable to speak plainly in a way that others can benefit through revelation, knowledge, prophesying, or doctrine. This is an interesting list because it shows us that the Lord teaches and communicates in a variety of different ways. The Lord uses a lot of methods in teaching. We see this in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus as well.

Paul revealed something here about the Corinthians. They were zealous for spiritual gifts. Evidently their zeal lacked wisdom, which reminds me of Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

It is important to be zealous for God, but is just as important that zeal be instructed by a discerning knowledge of scripture. Paul tried to redirect their zeal toward church practice which would benefit everyone in an orderly fashion.

Zeal does not mean we have to lose control of our bodies or emotions. One of the fruits of the Spirit listed for us is "temperance". (**Galatians 5:22-24**). Temperance is defined as self-restraint. In other words, someone controlled by the Holy Spirit will not lose control of their body or emotions. Hysteria is not a sign of the Holy Spirit.

I'm not saying there should be a lack of emotion in God's presence. I am saying that whatever we say, do, or feel in a church meeting should not disrupt others if it is the Holy Spirit.

Remember the goal in church is to build the church in love. Being disruptive or agitating other people is not the Holy Spirit. We should seek to edify others when we are in church. Our goal is edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:14-19

Again Paul repeated the same message. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. However, in church we need to proclaim God's word so people can be built up, edified, and encouraged. He said the same thing in a different way.

In these verses he included more specific information on the gift of tongues. Paul said he could pray with the spirit, he could sing with the spirit, and he could also bless with the spirit. I find that interesting. The only emphasis or practice of speaking in tongues I've seen in churches is when someone speaks in tongues and then they or someone else interprets it. What Paul described was the practice of personal, devotional praying in tongues, singing in tongues, and praising God in tongues. Not only did he pray in tongues, he prayed with his understanding as well. He sang with understanding. He blessed the Lord with his understanding.

In the church we need to communicate to God and others in such a way that people can understand and receive edification. There is no point speaking in tongues in church. The exception, as Paul pointed out, was when the person interpreted the tongues.

Paul said he wanted to teach others. He would rather say five words that could be understood in church rather than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

Throughout this chapter we want to keep in mind that Paul's point was that in a church meeting it was preferable to speak in plain words so people could understand, be encouraged, and be built up in their faith. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues in one's private devotions and also in a church setting if there is an interpreter.

Paul was focused on believers in these verses but he also discussed how a non-believer might wander into a church meeting. Paul said it would benefit the unbeliever to hear God's word preached in an understandable way so he could be convicted of his sin and confess, "God is in you of a truth!".

The point was to bring people to faith, and once they are in the faith, to feed their faith with edifying words which are plain for everyone to understand.

Paul quoted an Old Testament scripture about tongues being a sign. The reference pointed to foreign invaders who spoke in another language and came as judgment upon Israel for their sin. Paul said that in the same way "tongues" are a "sign" to the unbeliever.

My understanding of this statement is that when an unbeliever hears people speaking in tongues it is a sign of their doom. It is a glimpse of a spiritual kingdom which will become a kingdom on this earth in the not-so-distant future. The Lord Jesus will return and establish his kingdom on this earth.

I experienced something like this one time. I was visiting friends and family and there were non-believing relatives there. When my family visited everyone talked at the same time and it was difficult to hear anything above the noise. I have no idea why I did this but I started speaking in tongues quietly to myself while everyone was talking.

However, someone close by heard me, and when they looked at me there was an expression of anger on their face. I quickly stopped speaking in tongues. I almost did not realize I was speaking in tongues until I saw this person looking at me with anger. I wondered why this person was so angry. And then I read this verse about "tongues" being a sign to unbelievers.

Maybe the evil spirit which controls every unbeliever (**Ephesians 2:2**) heard those tongues and this unbeliever did not understand where the anger came from. I don't know. But this verse reminds me of that experience.

1 Corinthians 14:26-33

Does this sound like any church you have ever been in? What Paul is describing? Have you ever been in a church meeting where people were in a circle sharing a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation? Also, why did Paul mention two or three prophets in the church meeting? Do you know any prophets in your church at all? Probably not. I've heard some pastors I respect a lot say from the pulpit, in a joke, that their churches are "non-profit" ministries, meaning "No prophets allowed". What?!

The church in America is far away from what Paul described in this chapter. We have churches who are in direct disobedience to Paul's teaching and their services are complete pandemonium and chaos with people speaking in tongues. And then you have other churches where the only person who ever speaks

is the man who gets behind a pulpit on a stage. Is he the only person in that meeting who God wants to use to share a word with brothers and sisters? We are far away from the church meetings Paul described.

We should remember that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. If you are in a church service and people lose control of themselves then get out. These people are either ignorant or something worse and in either case it is best to get away.

My heart longs for what Paul calls "*churches of the saints*". Where are those churches of the saints?

1 Corinthians 14:34-40

This last verse is a good one to memorize. "*Let all things be done decently and in order*". Is a church meeting chaotic? Then people are ignorant of the Bible. Or, if they know this verse, are they deliberately disobeying the Bible? Do you want to be in a church where a pastor and congregation are in direct disobedience to the Bible?

The verse about women seems foreign to us today. If one took this verse in isolation then we could come to strange conclusions about Paul's teaching on church order. But this is not in isolation. It is in the context of Paul teaching us the best way to build the church and how to conduct ourselves in church. Paul said women should be quiet in church and they were not permitted to speak. He said this is also in the law. This flies right in the face of what I have seen in church and on so-called "Christian" television.

Paul went on to say it was a "shame" for women to speak in church. That is shocking. It is completely opposite of modern American churches. Not only do women talk in church but most churches are controlled and run by women. I just don't know what to say about these verses. I just read this and have to shake my head. I agree with the Bible. I just don't see how church as it exists in America could ever be brought to agree with this. What does this tell us about the church in America then?

Paul understood that he was teaching some doctrine that people would be unable to accept or apply to themselves. He said "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant". Paul warned us he gave us the commandments of the Lord.

Let all things be done decently and in order. Paul gave explicit instruction on how a church meeting should be run decently and in order. I have never seen a church yet follow the pattern outlined in this chapter.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

Paul said "*if ye keep in memory what I preached to you*". Does this mean a man has to remember the gospel to be saved? If you cannot remember the gospel then how will you believe the gospel? If you don't believe the gospel then are you saved? Can you believe the gospel in the past, then change your mind and no longer believe the gospel and now be unsaved? I do not know the answer to these questions. But I do know Paul said "*if ye keep in memory*". We have to remember the gospel. We need to know what the gospel is.

It might be surprising to do a survey of people walking out of church and ask them to outline the gospel. How can people be saved if they do not know the gospel? I went to a church one time for two or three months and never heard the Pastor mention the gospel. I finally left that church.

There are churches who no longer preach the gospel. They might have a sign over their door which would indicate they knew the gospel. But you won't hear the gospel. You hear a lot of words but you won't hear what Paul said here. We need to know the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation! (**Romans 1:16**).

I am thankful Paul lays out the gospel for us plainly so anyone can understand this. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was crucified. He died, and he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. There were people who saw him die and saw him alive again after he was buried. There are witnesses to this. It happened. In reality. In history. This is the foundation of the Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

In the first two verses Paul said he received the gospel. He now shared the content of the gospel. The content of the gospel is easy to remember: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Paul repeated two times that this was "according to the scriptures". The gospel was foretold and prophesied in the Bible which they had. The Bible they had was the Old Testament. Where in the Old Testament do we see the gospel? The gospel is seen beginning in **Genesis 3:14-15**. The gospel is seen in God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's promise is seen graphically in the account of how God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac (**Hebrews 11:17-19**).

The gospel is seen in the lives of men such as Job, Noah, Daniel, and David. Their life stories pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have specific scriptures which describe the crucifixion and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ such as **Psalms 22** and **Isaiah 53**.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes (**Romans 1:16**). Paul proclaimed the gospel over and over and he also gave the practical application of the gospel. He showed us in **Romans 6** how the application of the gospel not only forgave our sins but also delivered us from the power of sin. We understand from **Galatians 2:20** how Paul's "I am" (his self-life) was crucified with Christ. We see through these glimpses of how the believer is united with Christ in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. We are no longer dead in sin but God raised us with Christ and seated us with him in the heavens. (**Ephesians chapter 2**).

Everything we need to live a victorious Christian life is contained within the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. I also believe that even the three days points to the nature and character of God. Everything in the gospel is a full revelation of God three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:9-11

Here we see the humility of Paul. He did not forget who he was when Jesus saved him. He remembered he persecuted the church. In his own estimation he did not feel worthy to be an apostle. That is what the Lord Jesus made him by grace. Paul said it was because of God's grace he became an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of abundant grace bestowed on Paul he worked harder than the other

apostles in reaching the world for Jesus. This is evident in the book of Acts. His missionary journeys spread all across the Roman empire from one end to the other. Of all the apostles we have more letters in the Bible from Paul than any other apostle. Some of the apostles we don't know much of anything except what is recorded in the gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Paul was different. He was not neutral toward the Lord Jesus when he met him. Paul hated the Lord Jesus and Christians when he encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

God's grace bestowed on Paul was not in vain. It produced fruit for the kingdom of God. This is the goal of God's grace in our lives. God's grace goes beyond the forgiveness of sins. It changes us. It makes us into vessels of honor in God's hands. We are his instruments of building this spiritual temple for the Lord. We are part of the church and yet we are also called to build the church. We benefit from Christ and we also work with him to accomplish his purpose.

Paul said whether it was him or the other apostles who preached they believed the gospel. It was this gospel which was the power of God for salvation for everyone who believed. Now we continue to remember the gospel every day. We remember that Jesus shed his blood for us. We remember his body was broken for us. We remember Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

The problem Paul addressed was the doctrine of resurrection. Somehow people in the Corinthian church speculated whether or not the resurrection was true or not. This is similar to how people today speculate if the rapture of the church is true or not. It is idle speculation but it needs to be confronted and rebuked as Paul did here.

Paul used basic logic in his argument. If there is no resurrection then Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead on the third day. If Christ did not rise from the dead then there is no gospel message, no faith, and no salvation. Preaching is vain and so is our faith.

We glean from this passage that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart and foundation of our faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have nothing. It is essential in order for a man to be saved for him to believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have nothing. Everything we have hinges on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some things people can disagree on and still be in fellowship in the church. This is not one of those things which can be disagreed on. The resurrection is essential to faith, doctrine, and church fellowship. If someone denies this then they are no longer a Christian if they ever was one. There is no salvation without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul introduced something called "first fruits". Jesus was the first fruits of those risen from the dead. Paul used the word "sleep" to indicate that Christians do not experience death in the same way as unbelievers. Unbelievers die and die permanently. Christians do not die in a permanent sense because we were raised with Christ in eternity and will be raised in the future. There were people who came back from the dead before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but when Jesus was raised from the dead it was completely different. He did not come back from the dead to die again. He died one time and will never die again. He was raised with an immortal body which will never die again.

When we are resurrected we will also receive a new body like Jesus. I am looking forward to this! This is the hope of every born again Christian and it is what we look forward to.

1 Corinthians 15:21-28

Paul mentioned "*by man came death*". This pointed back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When they disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then death was brought into the world. By man came death. It was by this action of disobedience that death came, not just on man but on everything.

However, in the same way death came by man it was also by another man resurrection came. Through the Lord Jesus Christ resurrection and life came to the human race and to the world. Jesus said to Mary and Martha, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" (**John 11:25**).

In these verses we find that "in Adam all die". We are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. We inherited death from our first parents. In Adam we die. However, in Christ we are made alive. If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Just as in Adam all die so also in Christ all are made alive.

Christ is the first fruits. He was the first to rise from the dead and receive a resurrection body. When the Lord Jesus returns to this earth all those who put their faith in him will also be raised and receive a resurrection body.

After this will come the end when the Lord Jesus delivers up the kingdom to his Father. The Lord Jesus will put down all rule and authority and will be the final and only authority. He will put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy which will be destroyed is death itself.

It is hard to imagine a world where there will be no death, but it is certain that this world of eternal life will one day arrive. These verses point to a time when the Lord Jesus himself will be subject to the Father so that God will be all in all. This is pointing to an event, I think, which will initiate a completely new world. A new heavens. A new earth. God will be all in all. Hallelujah. I look forward to that day.

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Cults in America make a big deal out of "*baptized for the dead*". Nowhere else in the Bible is this phrase mentioned but cults make this a part of "church" practice to baptize people for relatives who are dead. It is a false practice which cults engage in. Paul was referring to pagan cults in his own day who practiced this. Paul often used examples from common culture and Greek literature in making points in his arguments.

His point was about the vain speculation of people in the church about future resurrection. Paul pointed out that if there was no resurrection then the entire gospel was based on a false premise. Of course there is a resurrection! If there is no future resurrection then Christ himself did not rise from the dead. The Lord Jesus is the first fruits of this resurrection. He is the first one to be raised from the dead and receive an eternal resurrected body which will never die again.

Paul said if there was no resurrection then the best we can do is live for the moment. He quoted a common proverb in his day: "*let us eat and drink for to morrow we die*". This was a proverb quoted by men who had no hope. Paul said if there was no resurrection then we have no hope. The best we can do is live for basic human need or desire right now and then die.

This kind of talk is "evil communications". It is corrupt conversation which weakens the faith of people instead of strengthening their faith. People in the church talked like this. Paul was not writing to people outside the church. Church people speculated there was no resurrection. Paul said to indulge in this vain conversation is "evil communications" and brings corruption.

Instead, wake up to righteousness and sin not. Share with others the knowledge of God instead of vain opinions. There are people who have not even been saved yet but we sit around splitting hairs on theological topics. Paul said it is a shame they indulged in this idle talk when there are people who still have not heard the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:35-44

I'm surprised Paul called those who questioned the resurrection "thou fool". The Psalms also said that those who do not believe in God are fools. **Psalm 14:1**, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*" People question the truth and have "conversations" and discuss topics which are already settled in the Bible if we just read the Bible and believe it. Most of what people question is already plainly stated in the Bible.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is historical fact. The future resurrection of believers is fact. Paul explained to those who asked the question "*with what body are people raised*" that the body we have now is not the same body we are resurrected with. It may look similar. People will be able to recognize us. But it is a spiritual body. Paul said there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

The natural body is in the process of dying. One day it will fail and our spirit will return to God. One day our spirit and body will be reunited and made into a new creation. This new body will be like the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have descriptions of the body of Jesus after he was raised. People could see him, they could hear his voice, and they also could touch him. Thomas touched his hands and his side. He knew it was the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the same way we will have a body that can be touched, seen, and a voice that can be heard. However, Jesus also could appear and disappear. He did not need to enter a door or leave through a window. He would appear and disappear. He could be in one place and then in a completely different place.

I think we will be like this. Our resurrected body will be capable of living in a way we cannot imagine right now.

Notice Paul made a clear distinction between different kinds of animals. Fish did not evolve into birds and birds into something else. Each kind has its own flesh. They did not evolve from one to another. ***Evolution is a lie of the devil*** and unbelieving men.

1 Corinthians 15:45-50

Paul pointed back to Genesis. All scripture is given by God and is profitable for teaching. The first Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, was made a quickening spirit. What is the difference between a living soul and a quickening spirit?

Adam was natural and made from the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven. He said as much. The Lord Jesus said he was from above and the people he spoke to were from below. Men come from dirt. The Lord Jesus came from heaven.

However, God is in the process of moving men from bearing the image of Adam to bearing the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are moving from being of earth to being of heaven. Paul said to set our mind on things above and not on things below. Read **Colossians 3:1-2**.

The Lord Jesus is the last Adam. Flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom of God. Our resurrected bodies will have flesh, but I don't think they will have blood. I think our new bodies will run on spiritual energy instead of blood. I am certainly looking forward to be clothed with life so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Paul described what is commonly known in English as the "*rapture*". This is the catching away of believers to meet the Lord in the air as described in **1 Thessalonians chapter 4**.

There will be a generation of believers who will never experience physical death. They will be alive when the Lord Jesus returns and will receive resurrection bodies. They will not die in their earthly, natural bodies. We shall not all sleep! This means we shall not all die and be buried in the ground. But we shall all be changed. What is this change? It is when our mortal body is transformed into our immortal body. This shall happen in a single moment and in the twinkling of the eye.

In light of these facts we are steadfast and unmovable. What we do for the Lord results in eternal rewards. Don't give up what we do for the Lord Jesus. There are many things which cause discouragement, fear, or unbelief. But we overcome these challenges and obstacles by faith in God's word. We have the sword of the Spirit in hand. The word of God is in our heart and it is on our lips. We meditate on these promises and encourage ourselves in the Lord every day.

Put one foot in front of the next. One day we will step out of these earthly bodies and into our heavenly bodies. This is our blessed hope: the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him.

1 Corinthians Chapter 16

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

This collection was not for the local church or to support ministry in a local church. This collection was for people who were suffering from a famine in Jerusalem. People were starving and this collection was to relieve the suffering of Christians in Jerusalem. Paul organized this network of churches in Galatia and Corinth to help supply a material need for Christians in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:5-9

Notice in Paul's travel plans he included "if the Lord permit". While he made plans to travel as an ambassador of Christ everything he planned was subject to the Lord's will. This truth is repeated in **James 4:15**. The Christian does not belong to himself. He belongs to the Lord. We are servants of the Lord. We are not in charge. All our plans are proposals and can be changed by the Lord. It is good to remember this when we are young. If we don't become accustomed to this as we get older it gets harder. Our journey is a journey of loss. Control is an illusion. None of us are in control. The Lord directs as he wills.

Paul included that he wanted to tarry in Ephesus and that a great door was open for him. He saw an opportunity to preach the gospel. People were open to the gospel. There were also enemies who opposed Paul and the gospel.

We need to look for opportunities to share the gospel. We can live an honorable life and be prepared to reply to anyone who asks us about our faith in the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:10-11

"See that he may be with you without fear". Compare this to **2 Timothy 1:7**. Paul encouraged Timothy to overcome fear. Paul thought of Timothy and his struggle with fear. He told the Christians in Corinth to consider this and encourage Timothy. We get insight into Paul's thoughts on his son Timothy. I wonder if we have the same concern for brothers and sisters in Christ?

He told the Corinthians that Timothy was a worker for the Lord. No one should despise him. Evidently Timothy was young and not much to look at but Paul stood up for him. We see how Paul interceded on behalf of his co-workers and co-laborers in the Lord. We can also get this insight into Paul's intercession in Philemon. Paul stood up for people. He vouched for people. He spoke well of his brother in Christ and made sure he was taken care of. What do we do for brothers and sisters in Christ?

Paul looked forward to the arrival of Timothy and asked the church to help Timothy. It seemed like Paul did not know exactly where Timothy was but guessed he would pass through the area where the Corinthian church was located. He expected Timothy to eventually report in.

In those days there was no location GPS. People relied on the Lord and prayed for one another and wrote letters. I long for simple days like that but I think that shipped has sailed. We won't have a simple life again until the Lord Jesus Christ returns and establishes his kingdom.

1 Corinthians 16:12

Paul "greatly desired" Apollos to go to Corinth but Apollos did not want to go. Interesting. What kind of apostolic authority did Paul have anyway? Couldn't he just order people around and tell them what to do? Evidently not. That is not the kind of authority Paul the apostle had.

What was Paul's apostolic authority then? The authority Paul had was the authority to lay down his life for the gospel. God's gifts to the church are not lords over the church. They are servants! Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. These gifts are not rulers over God's heritage. They are servants in God's house. They do what the Lord tells them to do.

We can learn from Paul's example to be gracious with co-workers. We can't force people. We can't control people. We can make suggestions but every servant answers to their Lord. Each one will give an account of himself to the Lord.

We are servants and not rulers over other servants. It is easy to forget that. I've known men who thought it was their job in a church or ministry to tell everyone else what to do. I had a ministry "leader" demand that everyone in his ministry quit drinking coffee or hand in their resignation. I did not last long in that ministry after he said that.

I enjoy reading these final words of Paul. I think people skip over this and do not think it is important. I enjoy thinking about the relationships between different people which Paul mentioned at the end of this letter. I wonder what it was like to live during those days and be a part of the early church.

1 Corinthians 16:13-18

Let's focus on Paul's instruction to stand fast in faith. This letter expected exertion on the part of the Corinthians to continue in the faith. It is not an automatic thing that just happened to them. Paul encouraged them to stand fast in the faith. This required exertion on the part of the believer.

What is the work needed for the Christian to stand fast in faith? The work is this: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe the gospel. Do not depart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is easy to drift from the gospel. We need to stay in God's word. We need to stay in prayer, too. It is that simple.

1 Corinthians 16:19-24

Did Paul pronounce a curse upon anyone who did not love Jesus? I think he did. Anyone who does not believe the gospel are under God's curse. They are under the wrath of God. The Bible makes it clear that God's wrath is upon anyone who does not believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**.

All men are under the curse of death. The only hope any person has is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the motivation for Paul to travel the known world planting churches, suffering persecution, proclaiming the gospel, and then dying a martyr's death. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope.

Paul concluded his letter by extending his love to all of them in Christ Jesus. We should love our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we truly love the Lord we will also love the family of God.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians Chapter 1

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Paul was an apostle by God's will.

Paul was not alone. He included his son in the faith Timothy. I read in First Corinthians chapter 16 how Paul included Timothy in his final instructions and greetings to this church. So this church was familiar

with Timothy. Paul was not a lone ranger in ministry. He included other people in what he did. He worked for God and with the church.

Right away Paul described God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He said God comforts us in our tribulation so we can help others who are in trouble. We are trained through trials to be able to minister to others who experience trials. The Lord does not waste anything in our life. Even the worst problems we experience go toward building us into the people the Lord wants us to be.

What kind of people does God want us to be? He wants us equipped to help others who are in need. He wants us to be able to comfort those who need to be comforted. He is the God of all comfort.

No matter what we go through the Lord Jesus feels compassion. He completely understands the human condition. He lived through it himself. He is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities. Read **Hebrews 4:15-16**.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

These verses have impacted and do impact my life. For many years I thought about these verses and today they come back in front of me with a big impact. These verses define for us a principle of God dealing with believers. This principle is wrapped up in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abides alone. But if it dies then it will bring forth much fruit. We see this in the life of Jesus. While he walked on the earth he could only reach so many people, but after his death and resurrection the gospel spread all over the world and has touched millions of people.

What does this mean to me personally? It means like Paul in this situation sooner or later God brings me to a place of death. Sooner or later I find myself in a wilderness where bones and rocks and stones cover the ground. I come to a place where there is no help for me from man or the world system. The only hope for me in this place of death is the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

I've experienced this a few times in my life. I can testify from experience that when I come to the end of myself the Lord Jesus raises me up and gives me a new life.

Paul said they were pressed out of measure to the point where they despaired of life. What kind of place is that? What could happen in a person's life that they would despair of life?

Don't listen to someone who preaches that the Christian's life is only about happiness, joy, prosperity, and health all the time.

God uses the wilderness, the suffering, the trials, the overwhelming circumstances to bring us to the end of ourselves. We come to a place where there is no human resource left.

We see this in the life of Abraham. God told Abraham he would have a son, but Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead when it came to children. They were beyond the age when people are physically capable of bearing children. And after God told Abraham this he made him wait another 25 years. It was not until they were about 100 years old that God gave them their promised son Isaac.

God allowed death on us so he can raise us from the dead by his power and then all the glory goes to God Almighty.

Think about Joseph. The Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and showed him his brothers would bow their knee to him. But what happened to Joseph after he received this word from God? He met a stranger wandering in a field who directed him to his murderous brothers. His brothers threw him in a pit in preparation for killing him but instead sold him into slavery. After slavery Joseph was put in a prison. Until one day! I always tell myself and my wife, "You never know what a day may bring forth." You never know! In one day Joseph went from prisoner in a dungeon to being the prince of Egypt.

God raised him from the dead. God lifted him up out of the pit. He set his feet upon a rock and put a new song in his mouth. Hallelujah. Read **Psalms 40:1-3**.

Do we understand why the Lord takes us to the place of death? It is for the purpose of delivering us so that many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

The Lord talks to us and he also talks through us. He tells the world that He is the Provider, He is the Protector, and He is the Portion. We do not need to turn to this world system of death. This world has the sentence of death on it.

Turn now to the God who raises us from the dead. This is the God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day. This God holds the power of death and life in his hands. He desires to give us life.

Turn to the Lord Jesus with all of your hearts and call on his name. He will deliver us today and he will deliver us again tomorrow. He is the God of all comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:12-14

What did Paul mean when he said "*even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus*"? Let's start at the end of this verse and work our way back. We can cross reference this with a similar verse in **1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**. I think there is a truth here that if we get hold on it would revolutionize our zeal to serve others.

How do we view brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we realize that when we serve others with whatever gift we have that it is an investment? I don't use the word 'investment' like the world system does. I'm talking about an eternal investment.

Can we see this? Paul said these churches were his "joy", his "rejoicing", and his "crown" when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. The "day" here points to a specific time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth. In that day Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I'm not trying to assign a particular time frame to the judgment seat of Christ. I don't know how long the "day" will last, but at some point the Lord returns, and at some point Christians stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This judgment is about rewards and inheritance.

What are these rewards and inheritance based on? I think we get a glimpse of what those rewards are based on by looking closely at what Paul said here. He barely mentioned this but there is a lot of

information packed in these verses. There is a revelation from the Lord we need to see clearly. It will change the way we view church and how we treat people in the body of Christ.

Paul said they acknowledge him "in part" because they admitted he preached the truth but they were not helping him to continue his ministry. When they could get hold on the truth he was proclaiming they would see that their reward on the day of the Lord would be helping Paul as he helped them. Our rewards are tied to helping one another to further the gospel in the world. Our reward is tied to our investment in serving others and building the church. They didn't really understand this yet like Paul did. They were just beginning to see it.

Godly sincerity and simplicity is a life free from self-centered motivations. It is a life that is dead to self, sin, the world, and the devil. It is a life which is committed to the purpose of God. This is a life which no longer invests in self, no longer worships self, no longer provides for self, no longer protects self. It is a life that died in Christ and was raised again to live completely for God. This is a simple life of godly sincerity. It is a life that is not lived according to the wisdom of the world. The world's wisdom is to put self first, to live for self, to provide for self, to protect self, and to worship self. This is the wisdom of the world.

But Paul did not live that way. He lived with godly sincerity and simplicity. He died to self, took up the cross, and lived for Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:15-20

All of God's promises are wrapped up in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Would we know this if Paul was not challenged by his critics? We can feel the criticism toward Paul in his defense of the gospel. Someone accused Paul of saying "yes" then saying "no" in regard to travel plans.

As Paul said this criticism of a servant of the Lord was also a back-handed criticism of the Lord and the Lord's promises. When we attack God's servants we attack him. Paul learned this lesson from the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was on his way to Damascus to persecute more Christians the Lord appeared to Paul and asked a question. "Why are you persecuting me?" the Lord asked. Paul was persecuting Christians, and yet the Lord asked Saul of Tarsus the question, "Why are you persecuting me?"

We should remember this. It will help us avoid criticizing the church if we remember these people are the body of Christ. There is a place for correction, rebuke, and reproof in the church. People need this. But we should be careful we do not criticize in error. Worse yet, gossiping and spreading rumors about people in the church. May the Lord help us stay away from this behavior.

God's promise to us in Christ Jesus is yes and amen. We can trust God's promises. The Lord will fulfill his word and promises. The Lord is trustworthy. Accusing God's servant of being untrustworthy is calling that servant's Lord into question as well. We can trust the Lord. We must choose to believe the best of people and when they sin we cover them with grace.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Believers in the Lord Jesus were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian. God the Father established us in Christ Jesus. He anointed us with the Holy Spirit. We were sealed by the Holy Spirit. He lives in our hearts.

Our assurance of salvation is contained in these verses. Ask the question: who is doing the work here? God is doing the work. God established us in Christ. He placed us into his Son and united us with the Lord Jesus in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

God is the one who anointed us. Do we attain some level of being spiritual before God anoints us? No, he anoints the person who believes the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus then God anoints us. We are sealed.

What does it mean to be sealed? What does earnest mean?

In Paul's day when someone sent a letter it was sealed with hot wax. This method of sealing letters was used even until a hundred years ago. Why was it sealed? So the contents would be made secure until it reached the proper destination.

God sealed us with the Holy Spirit and it is evidence that we will arrive at the destination God has for us. This gives us encouragement and assurance that the Lord will carry us on to completion until the day the Lord Jesus Christ returns. It is his work. God started the work, and God will finish the work in us. (**Philippians 1:6**).

An earnest is a down payment and is a promise that the full amount will be paid in the future. When we received the Holy Spirit it was a promise that assured us the Lord will complete what he started in our lives. He saved us, he will continue to save us, and one day our salvation will be complete. He justified us, he sanctifies us, and one day he will glorify us. This is God's work from beginning to end.

2 Corinthians 1:23-24

Paul continued with defending his travel plans while weaving in important doctrine if we pay attention.

Paul did not see himself as a lord or king over the faith of other Christians. Instead, he viewed himself and his ministry as coming alongside others to instruct, teach, exhort, and comfort brothers and sisters in Christ. If an apostle has this attitude then how much more do we need to have this attitude?

I think Paul revealed the attitude of Christ as well. Remember after the resurrection the Lord Jesus appeared walking with disciples on the road to Emmaus? When the night approached he made as if he would continue walking and leave the two disciples. Instead they invited him to a meal. This is a good example of how the Lord works in our lives. He walks with us. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us to instruct and teach us.

Paul said that he did not exert "dominion" over their faith but instead was a helper of their joy. What joy? The same joy Paul had. It is the joy of laying down our life for the gospel and for the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no higher joy than this.

People today in the church exercise dominion over the faith of other people. They build churches on the basis of the world system and the worship of self. Those places are filled with spiritual death.

If you really want to find spiritual life then die to self. Die to self. Deny self, take up the cross, and walk the way of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians Chapter 2

2 Corinthians 2:1-10

The back story of what Paul was discussing here went back to the first letter to the Corinthians. In that letter Paul corrected them for allowing a man in open sin to continue in the church. He instructed them to discipline this man. The purpose of discipline was to bring the man to repentance and sorrow for his sins.

The church followed Paul's instructions and the man had godly sorrow for his sins. Now, Paul followed up and urged them to bring the man back into fellowship and restore him. This is the goal of church discipline: restoration of the wayward Christian.

It was hard for Paul to write his previous letter. Paul knew it was the right thing to do to command these Corinthians to put this man out of fellowship but it was still a struggle for Paul. Why is it hard to do the right thing? Because the enemy always lies to us and tries to stop us from standing for truth. The enemy will discourage us especially when it comes to standing alone for truth. Now Paul was relieved that they stood with him for truth and the result was what the Lord wanted. This man repented of his sin and was brought to godly sorrow. Now Paul urged the church to forgive him and affirm the love of God for him.

Forgiveness comes after repentance. We are eager to forgive people who did not repent of their sin. First comes truth, spoken in love, to the wayward person. If the person repents then we forgive. If the person does not repent we still forgive the person but we cannot fellowship with someone who is in rebellion. We cannot agree with someone who lives in open sin. Why? If we fellowship with someone like this then we are in agreement with them. Their sin will become our sin as well. We must come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. We must be holy, pure, and clean before the Lord. We must confess our sins and walk in humility and repentance. This church did the right thing. They followed Paul's instructions and it worked out according to God's will.

It takes courage and faith to follow God's will in circumstances like this. Human nature prefers to take the easy path of acceptance and friendship of other people even when they are in open rebellion against God. Read **Proverbs 27:5-6**.

2 Corinthians 2:11

In the context of this chapter Satan's device would be withholding forgiveness. After they disciplined the man who lived in open sin he experienced godly sorrow. This godly sorrow led to repentance and turning away from sin. Now the proper thing to do was forgive the man and reassure him of God's grace.

It appears they did not automatically do this or understand this was what they should do. Paul had to tell them and instruct them to forgive the man. By this we learn one of Satan's devices in attacking the church.

Failing to forgive is a grave error. Jesus taught on failing to forgive others and tied this with God's forgiveness of us. Our failure to forgive will prevent God's forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus taught about forgiveness in Matthew 18. It was because God's desire to forgive men of their sins that Jesus came into the world. Christ came into the world and died upon a cross so we could receive forgiveness from God. This is central to what it means to be a Christian.

We cannot allow ourselves to hold a grudge against anyone. If anyone comes to us and repents we must forgive. I'd like to add that any man who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be ready to forgive. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will be willing to forgive people.

If someone never repents we still cannot carry hatred toward them. We need to forgive and pray for that person. Pray they will receive the truth about the Lord Jesus.

The Christian life is marked by forgiveness and humility. Those who carry a grudge do so at their peril. It is a hard to defend ourselves against people. Only God can truly protect us. Our job is to forgive and release people to God.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

Here we see a glimpse into Paul's method of ministering. He did not minister alone. He worked with other people. This is a good example. We should not be alone in ministry. I know from experience that by going alone we find ourselves in circumstances over our head. We need to work with the church and brothers in Christ.

Paul went to Troas to preach the gospel and a door opened for him. He did not continue for long because he did not find Titus. After saying goodbye to the church in Troas he traveled to Macedonia.

Paul continued to share travel plans with the Corinthians. They criticized him in the past and used his travel plans against him. Paul continued to make himself vulnerable to attack. Why not keep your traveling plans to yourself? Paul was transparent and straight forward with everyone.

It is easy when people attack us to withdraw and no longer share with others. God calls us to continue to put ourselves out there on the front line and make ourselves a target. We cannot stop the enemy from using people to attack us. We can decide to keep serving God no matter what.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

To smell good food or a pleasant fragrance is to '*savour*' that food or fragrance. This applies to taste and smell. What does it mean that God makes manifest the '*savour*' of his knowledge by us in every place?

This idea came from conquering Roman armies returning in victory. There was a victory parade and people burned a particular incense to fill the air with the fragrance of victory and celebration.

We are in the triumphant parade of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everywhere we go we exude the aroma of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be smelled by other Christians and also by unbelievers.

For Christians the smell is sweet and encouraging. For unbelievers the smell is the aroma of death and their own demise. No wonder unbelievers despise the Spirit filled Christian so much. That Christian represents their end. Unbelievers would not put it into these words. Their hatred is the hatred of those who go to their doom.

Who is sufficient to walk in the victory march of the Lord Jesus Christ? We are only sufficient as God makes us sufficient. There are people who pretend to be a part of the victory parade so they can sell their trinkets. They peddle the word of God for money. The enemy attempts to subvert the truth of God even in the face of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is defeated. The Lord Jesus Christ has won the victory through his death, his burial, and his resurrection.

2 Corinthians Chapter 3

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

A letter of commendation is like what we think of as job references. At that time traveling preachers would probably collect letters of reference so they could get their foot in the door of churches. For Paul this was not necessary. These people were his letter of reference. If anyone wanted to know Paul's credentials they could look at the churches he started. These human epistles were not created with a pen and ink but were living letters written by the Holy Spirit.

When I was a young man I thought I wanted to be a writer. I had life controlling problems for which I entered a Christian program. While in the program I was saved by the Lord and my life transformed. There was a crucial point when I almost walked away. The staff who counseled me asked me why I wanted to leave. I told him it was because I was a writer and did not have time to write in the program. Looking back now that was a ridiculous thing to say. But it illustrates where I was at in my thinking. Later after I finished the program and devoted myself to ministry someone asked me if I would take up writing again. It was around that time I came across these verses in Second Corinthians. My reply to that question was that my writing was now these young men.

I still feel that way. The Lord has me writing but I long for the days when my writing could be the Holy Spirit working through me to serve young people struggling with life controlling problems. Lord, direct my path once again to writing your word into the hearts of young Christians again.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

We live today in a culture that demeans the Bible and the gospel. It subverts the gospel by replacing it with alternative religions, philosophies, psychology, and psychiatry. People replace the gospel with 12-step programs. They replace the gospel with self-help and self-reliance. Men make a lot of money promoting these alternative systems of thinking and living. Man-centered religion, philosophy, and systems are anti-Bible and hostile to the gospel.

One weapon the world system uses is to make those who use the Bible seem less professional or unqualified to help people who are suffering with life controlling problems. People who struggle with mental or emotional problems feel like they have no alternative but what the world system offers.

I thank God when I was young the Lord sent me to a place where people taught the Bible as the authority in dealing with addiction, mental problems, and emotional issues. I was saved by God's grace and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It set me free and changed me from a drug addict and an alcoholic into a Christian. Notice I am stating that a Christian is not a drug addict and he is not an alcoholic. A man who confesses he is a drug addict cannot also confess he is a Christian. People do this, but they are ignorant, deceived, or in rebellion against God's word. Read **2 Corinthians 5:17**. If you

truly believe this verse in the Bible then you cannot claim to be a drug addict and also a Christian at the same time. A Christian is a new creation. Drug addiction is a part of the flesh, the old man, and the carnal man.

I realize a new Christian will continue to be tempted. However, for a man to experience enduring freedom from addiction he must build his life upon the solid foundation of truth and this truth is Jesus Christ. When you are born again you are literally changed into a new man. You need to change your confession to line up with the truth of God. The longer you do this the more you have victory over your old life of addiction. I am a living testimony of this. I know this is the truth from personal experience.

My point is that God's word is sufficient. I am preaching that the gospel is sufficient to help people with every problem they suffer with. Men always try to discount the power of the gospel and God's word. However, I know from the Bible and from personal experience that what we need is faith in God and in his son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the answer. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver us, heal us, and save us. Jesus Christ makes us into a whole man.

Our sufficiency is of God and he has made us able ministers of the New Testament. Every Christian who believes the word of God is an able minister. We have been cheated out of participating in ministry by men who think the only one who is able to minister is the one who went to Bible college.

We have been cheated by a religious system built on the pride of the world system that has cheated the common man from using his gifts in ministering in the church.

We have been cheated by men who put more emphasis on prestige and titles and diplomas. This emphasis on education and titles and prestige comes from the world system. It cheats the common Christian out of the opportunity to minister in the church.

The church today is set up to keep the majority of the people sitting in a pew doing nothing except putting money into an offering plate. This system is wrong. It is unbiblical.

Every man in the church is an able minister of the new testament if he believes the gospel and is born again. Every born again Spirit filled Christian is an able minister and is made sufficient by God to preach the gospel.

My belief is that in order to have revival in America we will need a fundamental change in the way people view church and ministry. This fundamental change will mean we go back to what Paul described in 1 Corinthians 14 where you had multiple men taking turns prophesying God's word and edifying the church in an orderly fashion. We need to follow the example of Christ in serving people in humility. We need to deny self and refuse to make a name for self. Instead, we need to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

The gospel and God's word is sufficient. The power of God is demonstrated when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. God can completely change the lives of people when they hear the gospel and believe it. This is the work God has called us to. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and magnify the gospel of his death, burial, and resurrection.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11

Paul compared the New Testament gospel to the Old Testament law which was given by God to Moses and Israel. Everything in the law and Old Testament pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled all of the law given to Israel. Paul said that the law God gave to Israel was glorious. It revealed who God is. The law of God is a description of God.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the law and is a better demonstration of God. He is God himself. If you see Jesus then you see God. The gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ are much more glorious than what Moses and Israel had from the Lord.

We travel forward through time and learn more about God in a progressive fashion. He reveals himself to man in a progressive fashion. Some people do not want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of who God is. They stay with the old revelation they had of God.

This can be applied to our personal lives. Paul said he forgot those things which were behind and pressed on to take hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Philippians 3:13-14**. What was behind Paul? The law. Judaism. Moses and the ten commandments. All of that was behind him in his life as a Pharisee. What was in front of him? The Lord Jesus Christ. With everything in him Paul reached forth to take hold on Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Christ showed us the glory of God. The gospel is more glorious than the law given to Moses and Israel. We need to move beyond thinking in terms of the law and comprehend the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

We should follow Paul's example of speaking with plainness. People try to complicate the gospel and God's message with convoluted systems. Let's stick to the plain word of God and preach the whole counsel of God.

Paul said what God did through Moses was not plain to Israel. They did not understand everything God did through the law and Moses. They did not understand that this pointed toward a greater reality. They did not see the goal which God pursued through the establishment of the nation of Israel, through the law, and through the ordinances he gave Israel. All this pointed them to God's son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see that the mind of those who continue to look to the Jewish law have their mind blinded. I've said it before but it is so true: religion is one of the most effective weapons Satan has to blind people so they cannot see the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is religion? It is people gathering together around an idol, or a philosophy, or a creed, or an idea and making a confession which they agree on. This is religion. This practice of religion separates people from the living God in Christ Jesus.

The only confession and agreement which men can make which will save their soul is to agree with God regarding his son Jesus Christ. Our confession should be the gospel: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

When we turn to Christ there is no longer any need to follow the law God gave Moses. This includes the ten commandments. We only have one law now: it is the law of Christ. We are under Christ Jesus himself and not a written code. The law was fulfilled by Christ Jesus. What we could not do the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. God now places us into his son and counts the obedience of the Lord Jesus as our obedience.

When someone turns in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ this veil of religion is removed. Only when we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ can we see reality as it exists. We no longer live by our vain imagination or according to vain religions men create. Instead, we live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are free from religion, philosophy, asceticism, and systems of thinking which men create. We have been set free to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We have spiritual liberty and freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. We are exhorted to never become entangled again by this yoke of bondage to religion, or philosophy, or what men call science. We have been set free to enjoy the Lord and follow him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

As we continue beholding the Lord Jesus we are changed into his image. We are changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the living God. The Holy Spirit applies the finished work of Christ to our lives. Our sins are forgiven and we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil. We are being prepared for an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God.

2 Corinthians Chapter 4

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

For me the key here is the phrase "*we faint not*". Why do we "*faint not*" in ministry? Because we have this ministry in the same manner we received mercy from God. How did we receive mercy from God? Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We persevere because of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not for us. It is for the Lord Jesus Christ. When we love the Lord Jesus we can continue. If we do not really know the Lord Jesus, or if we stop looking at him and trusting in him, then we will become faint. We lose heart when we forget the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Our sufficiency is from God and not from ourselves. Paul taught us that God brings us to a place of death so we learn not to trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. The Lord raises us up and so we do not lose heart or become faint. Those who wait on the Lord renew their strength.

Our purpose is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. From him flows everything we need for life and godliness. When we abide in him we have everything we need. It is only when we forget him and take our life into our hands that we get into trouble.

Not only do we look to Jesus but we also renounce every goal, purpose, and motive which contradicts the gospel. The gospel gives us the picture of death, burial, and resurrection. This is the Christian life. We do not live for self, therefore our goal is not self-centered. We renounce every scheme of using God's word to promote self. Our goal is to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is an easy trap for ministries, churches, and servants in God's house. It is easy because men are almost always blind to self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. It takes a revelation from the Holy Spirit to clearly see the curse of the serpent in fallen man. Without the Holy Spirit we automatically resort to living for self. We automatically promote self. We automatically worship self.

The only way we can handle the word of God in a way that is pleasing to God and will impact the conscience of those who hear the gospel is to be completely self-less. We must be dead to self. We must be completely given to the cause of Christ and not ourselves. A man who is dead to self and living completely for God will inflict heavy casualties in the enemy's camp.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

There are people who cannot understand the gospel. Why do some people get saved and some people do not? I don't know. We have one reason for this problem here. Paul revealed that the gospel is hidden to those who are lost. Satan blinds the minds of people who do not believe so the light of the gospel cannot penetrate their blindness.

The world mentioned is a system of living in independence from God. This world system includes government, business, and society. The spiritual aspect of the world system is described by John as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (**1 John 2:16**). Satan is the god of this world. We know this because of the account of the temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus he offered him the kingdoms of the world. From this we know Satan indeed is the "god" of this present world system. He is behind every king, queen, president, and world ruler.

Paul opens this up for us in **Ephesians 6**. **Ephesians 6:12**, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* The apostle John confirms that the whole world system currently in place is of the devil in **1 John 5:19**, *"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* The apostle James warns us that if anyone loves the world he is an enemy to God. **James 4:4**, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* To be a friend of the world system is to be a friend of Satan. This world system is in agreement with the devil.

Satan and the system he runs on this earth blinds men to truth and the gospel. How does he do it? He manipulated men into a system which forces men to provide for self, protect self, and ultimately to worship self. The world system forces men to put themselves first. It teaches men to love themselves first. It teaches men how to take care of their material needs independent from any thought of God. It suppresses the spiritual and exalts the material. The world system is designed to teach men to exalt their own selves with pride and position. It teaches men to make a name for self and subject others underneath of one's name in order to acquire provision, protection, and power. The world system completely corrupts those who love it and who live for it. Those who live for money and success in the world system are the enemies of God Almighty. Read **James 5:1-3**.

This is how men are blinded to the gospel. The devil keeps them preoccupied with self. They spend their lives pouring out their energy, life, and resources upon self. The thought of God does not enter their mind.

The enemy succeeds by teaching men to live just like he does: independent, self-reliant, and exalting one's own name. He succeeds by seducing men into worshiping self.

Jesus lived the opposite of this. He came into this world to lay down his life and serve others. He showed us how God wants us to live. We are not to live self-centered but instead Christ-centered. Our goal is the Lord Jesus. The goal of the Lord Jesus was to live completely for the heavenly Father. This is the example we follow. **Philippians 2** outlines this.

Today is the day of salvation. Repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn your heart completely to the Lord Jesus Christ and believe the gospel. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

2 Corinthians 4:5-6

People preach themselves. They preach their experiences, they talk about their life, and they share their feelings or opinions. Paul said he did not preach about himself. He did share about his life in passing as it was necessary to defend and proclaim the gospel. But the focus was never on Paul. We don't really know a lot about the life of Paul. Most of what we know of Paul someone else wrote about him in the book of Acts.

Instead Paul preached Christ Jesus the Lord. He did not say he preached but "we" preached. He is not thinking of himself but what he and his co-workers did. They did not preach about themselves but instead they preached Christ Jesus the Lord.

Paul and his co-workers presented themselves as servants to those they preached to. Paul was their servant for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Those who believe the gospel are the church and it is this church Paul said is the body of Christ.

Paul is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and so he is a servant of the church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. It would help us when we relate to other believers to remember this. This person who believes the gospel is part of the body of Christ. Remember the Lord Jesus when he first confronted Saul of Tarsus completely identified himself as those Christians whom Paul persecuted.

We are reminded of how God first spoke light into existence. This goes back to the beginning of Genesis. From Genesis to Revelation God is the same God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This same God who created all things gave us his son Jesus Christ. It is through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that we come into contact with God and know him. It is only through the son of God that we can know him. Everything else is only shadows of Christ Jesus the Lord.

We can see the glory of God when we look on the Lord Jesus. When we think about how Jesus humbled himself, how he died on the cross for us, how he was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day. Then we see God clearly. God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a full revelation of who God is. It is in the face of Jesus Christ that we see God.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

The power of God for salvation is the gospel. This message is the treasure we carry in these earthen vessels. Paul was making reference to the book of Genesis. Earthen vessels point back to how God made Adam out the dust of the ground. The human body is made of dirt. These vessels walk around with the power of God within them, but this power of God can only be transferred to another vessel by breaking the first vessel. The treasure can only be shared if the vessel is broken.

This is why Paul went into this next part about "troubled yet not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed". What does that mean? It means the earthen vessels which carry the gospel must be broken in order to transfer the power of God to another earthen vessel.

We can see this at Calvary. God could not forgive us until Christ died on the cross for us. Jesus gave his life and died so we could have life. Jesus taught about this when he said a grain of wheat abides alone until it dies and then it can bring forth new life. In the same way we can only transfer this saving power from ourselves to someone else by dying first.

If we sincerely want to bring God's word to other people then the Lord will make sure we get broken so this can be accomplished. Have you asked God to use you? Have you asked God to make you into a minister of his gospel? Get ready to get broke. The gospel can only go through a broken vessel. It cannot go any other way.

Jesus prayed in the Garden, "*Father if there is any other way!*" But there is no other way. Life can only be given when the giver dies.

When we die God raises us up to new life. We are raised with resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Death works in us so we can give life to other people. This is the way of Calvary. This is the way of the cross. This is the way of God. We die so others may live.

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

These "*light*" afflictions work for us. What do these light afflictions work? An eternal weight of glory. We cannot compare our suffering with the glory which we will receive. This provides motivation to never give up. Our afflictions are light in comparison to what lies ahead. This light affliction only lasts for a moment. This eternal weight of glory! How long is eternal? Forever. This trial lasts only a moment. The glory ahead of us is eternal. We cannot compare the two. We keep our attention on what is invisible instead of the visible trials. How can we focus on what is invisible? By faith and we must decide to live by faith every single day.

We do not faint on this journey of loss. Our outward man perishes but our inward man is renewed day by day. Our spirit grows stronger as we get closer to our eternal inheritance. The outward man dies but the inward man lives forever. This is what we focus on. We invest ourselves in what lasts forever.

Paul told them his suffering was for their benefit. It was through these difficulties he brought the gospel to them. This gospel is brought on the lips of those who pay a price. We die daily so others may benefit from the gospel.

The same God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will raise us up. We will be resurrected along with all the saints who went before us. Paul looked forward to the resurrection and standing with this church. I wonder if it entered his mind that not only this church but the church for 2,000 years following would stand there with him?

We are thankful to be saved and thankful for the opportunity to lay down our lives so others can hear the gospel. We are thankful God uses us to help others get to know him better. We will stand before the Lord one day and our thanksgiving will resound to the glory of God. All glory, honor, and praise to the Lamb of God. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns.

2 Corinthians Chapter 5

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

The earthly house of this tabernacle mentioned in these verses is the body. We have a body created from dust so Paul calls it an earthly house. Tabernacle is another word for tent or temporary dwelling place. If this body dies we have another body from God which is a body not made with hands and is eternal. Perhaps Paul used the word "if" here because not everyone will die but some will be alive when the rapture happens. God prepared for us a resurrection body similar to the body which the Lord Jesus had after he was raised from the dead.

In this we groan? I think this describes the turmoil a Christian endures in this fallen world, but also could reflect how men feel in general feel with the difficulties of life. We are all on a journey of loss. As we grow older, get sick, and deteriorate we groan inwardly. The Christian longs for his new, resurrected body. In this new body we will never be naked but clothed completely in the life and the righteousness of Christ Jesus. We will never be ashamed, embarrassed, or humiliated again in these bodies.

This is God's plan and he gave us his Holy Spirit as a guarantee of what will come for us. As long as we are in the earthly body we cannot fully enjoy the presence of God. When we depart this body and receive our new body we will enjoy the presence of God forever. The assurance of God's promise makes us look forward to the future when his promise will be fulfilled. While we live in this body we walk by faith in God's promise. We walk by faith and not by sight. We should repeat this to ourselves as often as we can. This is a walk of faith. We do not walk by sight. We walk by faith.

Absent from the earthly body we are immediately in God's presence. Our spirit will return to God who gave it. Those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ look forward to an eternity in God's presence.

2 Corinthians 5:9-12

Paul taught that Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This is a judgment for believers. This judgment is not about heaven or hell. The believer is secure in what the Lord Jesus did for us. If we believed the gospel we are saved. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of the

Lord Jesus Christ. When we put our faith in the Lord Jesus we are secure in him. This judgment is a review of what the believer did while in the body. This is a life review to determine inheritance and reward in God's kingdom.

When Paul thinks about this he immediately follows up with "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*". We need to understand that Christians should be taught to fear God and live in such a way to receive their reward and inheritance at the judgment seat of Christ. Some people may have a hard time believing this but it is right here in the Bible. **Revelation 3:11**, "*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, **that no man take thy crown.***"

The crown is reward and inheritance. Jesus was exhorting the believer to be diligent in protecting their inheritance. It is possible to lose rewards because of relationships with unbelievers or other Christians who lead us to things we should not be a part of.

I remember when the gravity of these verses dawned on me. I felt so helpless. I prayed as often as I could that God would help me to live each day in view of the judgment seat of Christ. I prayed and asked the Lord to guide my life so that when I stood before him I would not lose my reward or inheritance. Pray this kind of prayer and the Lord will hear you. This is praying according to God's will. People always want to pray about the temporary things in life but we need to pray about what is eternal and what will have impact on us in eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:13-16

Previously Paul mentioned how "*the terror of the Lord*" motivated him to preach the gospel. Here we see that the love of Christ is a motivation for him in the ministry as well.

The one who died for all is the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for our sins. We were dead in our sins and trespasses. He died for all! Not just a select group, but he died for all! Anyone and everyone who believes the gospel is saved. All who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus are saved.

After salvation we no longer live for self. We are no longer self-worshippers. We no longer live according to self-interest, self-provision, self-protection, self-promotion, self-worship. Now we live to put the interests of Christ first. We look to God for provision and protection. We promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. We worship the Lord God and him only.

We live for him who died for us and rose again. We live to Christ, for Christ, and in Christ. It is no longer "I" who lives but Christ who lives in me. The crucifixion was the death blow to the self-life. When Jesus was crucified the religion of Self Exaltation which Satan inspired was destroyed. Jesus destroyed the work of the devil. Jesus broke the power of sin. He delivered us from the world system and from the enemy. We were translated out of darkness and into the Kingdom of God's Son.

We no longer know our brothers and sisters according to the flesh. The flesh represents relating to people according to the principle of self-interest. You scratch my back and I scratch your back. This is no longer how we live. Now we live in the Spirit and give our life away. We die to self so others can receive the life of the Holy Spirit. We spread the gospel when we die and Christ lives through us. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remember, God put us in Christ. We are united with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

We no longer know Christ according to the flesh. We do not follow him around like the crowds so they could get healing or a free piece of bread. Our relationship with Christ is no longer just what we can get from him. Our relationship with him is to be one with him in goal and purpose. We are one with him. This is living according to the Spirit and the gospel. We are united together with him and are one with him. Those who see this truth walk in the authority of God's Kingdom and eat of the hidden manna. They are overcomers. Why are they overcomers? Because they died with him and were buried with him, and rose from the dead with him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Soon after I became a Christian I was given this scripture verse to memorize. My teacher asked me how this verse applied to my life. I was instructed to apply this to my life and set goals. I read this verse and the Lord showed me how this verse applied to me. I understood that I was no longer the person I was a few weeks before. I was in deep sin and headed for an early grave or jail. But the Lord graciously pulled me out and sent me to a Christian program where I was dramatically saved and set free from many life controlling problems. As I read this verse I realized I was a new creation. The word creature in the King James Version means "creation". I was a new man. The old man was gone.

My old life was passed away and all things became new. I knew this for a fact because my life changed so dramatically that the old man stood in stark contrast to this new creation I became. I put my faith in the Lord Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit. There was an intense zeal in my heart to read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Bible. I searched for ways to apply scriptures to my life. This verse was one that always stuck with me because it is basic to the entire Christian life.

When we believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and we confess with our mouth we are instantly changed. We may not feel it, we may not see it right away, but it literally happens. For me I was fortunate that the change was dramatic and it was not hard for me to see, but for other people the change may not be as evident immediately. However, a Christian is a new creation. A Christian is a new man. It does not matter how we feel nor what opinion people may have on the matter. When we share with people we are a Christian they will look for change in our life but sometimes change comes gradually.

However, salvation is real the moment we believe the gospel. The old man is gone. He died on the cross with the Lord Jesus. We are a new man. We are a new creation. Old things passed away.

Why is this important? The reason it is important is because our future life is determined by what we believe today. What I believe in my heart today determines where I will be tomorrow. If I believe I am a grateful recovering addict then I will be in another AA meeting holding hands with people who do not believe in Jesus Christ. When I confess what they confess I end up like them. Some of those people may also confess to be Christians but they do not understand what the Bible says about who they are if they continue to agree with unbelievers.

An unbeliever says he is a recovering addict. A Christian is not a recovering addict. A Christian is a new man. The old man is gone. This does not mean the Christian will not suffer from temptations to drugs, or alcohol, or any other sin. Christians are tempted to sin. But that temptation and even sometimes failure does not change who he is. He is no longer that old man. He is a new creation. He is born again. The Holy Spirit now lives inside of him and his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He can never go back into one of those meetings and confess something that is not true. If he does that, if he

goes back, he will suffer. He will continue to suffer with temptations and never find victory which the Lord Jesus alone can give him.

I can tell you today I no longer suffer from the temptations I had when I was saved. That was in 1989. I do not even remember what it feels like to get high any more. I don't remember what crack smells like. I don't remember what smoking cigarettes tastes like anymore. Those things were left behind me so, so long ago. How was I able to leave it all behind me?

Because I decided to believe this Bible verse. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says I am a new creature. Old things have passed away. All things are new. I no longer confess anything except what the Bible says about me. The Bible says I am a child of God. I believed in my heart Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He died on the cross for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. I confess this with my mouth. I have told many people I believe this. I know I belong to my heavenly Father. When Jesus Christ returns I will go up in the rapture to meet him in the air and I will be with him forever. Only a man who is born again can say that.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Here we take another look at the principle of receiving and giving. We have received forgiveness of our sins. God has reconciled us to himself through his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what is our duty? We become ambassadors of this reconciliation. Once we receive the benefit of knowing Christ our duty is to share the good news with others. Why not? Why would someone want to keep this to himself? If a man does not want to share the gospel with others I find it doubtful he really believed the gospel himself.

God committed to us this message of reconciliation. It is not optional. God is not asking us if we want to share the gospel with others. Instead, he commits this responsibility to us. We are ambassadors for Christ. God speaks to the world through our witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We plead with people in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God through his Son.

God has made his only Son Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus did not know any sin. He was the perfect, sinless sacrifice for us. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Why? So that we would be made the righteousness of God in Christ. When we believe in Christ we are united with him and become one with him. What Christ did in his earthly life and ministry we now do. We share the gospel with people and we deny ourselves. We deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. As Christ is so are we. We die so others may receive eternal life. We are part of his body. In this way we fill up the sufferings of Christ in our flesh so that others may benefit from Christ as well.

There is nothing mystical about this. It is practical. You do not have to flagellate your back for God. All you have to do is humbly serve others and share the gospel as you have opportunity. Just by doing this you will suffer in the world system. But we take all this suffering in stride. The servant is not greater than his master. The Lord Jesus also suffered for the sake of his heavenly Father. We follow in his footsteps.

2 Corinthians Chapter 6

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

I have heard these verses preached in evangelism to unbelievers. This is used to urge people to make a decision for Christ. However, Paul was not writing to unbelievers. He was writing to Christians in Corinth. What is the purpose of telling believers that today is the "time accepted".

It may seem I am throwing doubt on the security of salvation. I am convinced the man who believes the gospel is secure in salvation. However, the man must believe the gospel.

Our work is to believe in God's son. Each day is the day of salvation. Our salvation is secure when we believe the gospel. I must believe the gospel. Today! It is not enough that I believed the gospel at some point in the past. I must believe the gospel today. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Salvation is not for yesterday or tomorrow. It is for today.

Today is the eternal now. I have no other time than the time I am experiencing at this present moment. Right now I must believe the gospel or be lost. I cannot trust that I believed the gospel yesterday or years ago. I must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ now at this moment. We cannot rely on the past or the future. We can only rely on the Lord Jesus Christ right now in this present moment. Now is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time, now is when I believe the gospel.

Do you believe the gospel right now, at this very moment? If you believe the gospel then you are saved and eternally secure.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

Here is an impressive list of credentials for ministers of God. Those who serve God and the church should qualify on this obstacle course! I'm looking close and I don't see a Bible college education, theology degrees, or diplomas here. All I see is a man's personal experience with God. I see a man on the backside of the desert and dying to self, sin, the world, and the devil.

What should a church look for when they interview a new pastor? Has the man suffered for believing the gospel? Has his life been in danger? Has he been persecuted for this faith? Does he live a pure life, does he have experiential knowledge of God, is he patient, is he kind, is full of the Holy Ghost? Does this man walk in God's love with God's truth in his mouth? Is he ready with a word in season for those who need it? Is he unknown or does he have a big name? Does he live for others or does he live for himself?

If we take this list serious it would change the way we look for ministers of God. It would change the way we consider ourselves and our service to God.

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

Paul gave everything in ministering to the Corinthians. He gave his heart to the service of this church. His mouth was open and his heart was enlarged. He preached the gospel and held nothing back. His heart was filled with love for them. He was committed to their best interests.

Now, he wanted them to see his example. In the same way he gave his life for them, he now wants them to learn to give their lives. Instead of being self-centered he wants them to grow up in Christ and learn how to die to self and live for God. In the same way he lived he wants them to also live for God.

As Paul's heart was filled with love for them he asked them to also allow their heart to fill with love as well. "Be ye also enlarged" means to have a heart filled with God's love.

A recompense in the same means they should follow the example Paul lived in front of them. Lay down your life for the Lord Jesus. Give everything for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

This is a good portion of scripture to meditate on because it will save the Christian much grief and suffering if he understands this.

Paul used words like "*yoked*", "*fellowship*", "*communion*", "*concord*", and "*agreement*". What is he talking about?

This is a picture of a believer trying to have a relationship with someone who does not believe in Christ. A Christian who tries to fellowship, commune, and make agreements with someone who is not a believer is heading straight for big time trouble.

Think about this in simple terms. A believer is on his way to heaven. The unbeliever is on his way to hell. A believer is supposed to live a Christ-centered life. An unbeliever lives a self-centered life. How can the Christian be happy or have joy in a situation like this?

It is impossible. All the Christian can expect from this relationship is suffering and discipline. The Christian will reap the wind and his life will not bear the fruit which God wanted him to bear.

It is like someone who purposely plants weeds in his vegetable garden instead of pulling the weeds out of his garden. It doesn't make sense does it?

But when we spend our life in fellowship, communion, and agreement with unbelievers then we are doing the same thing. We are purposely planting weeds in the garden of our life. We will not be able to bear anything useful for the kingdom of God. If we are able to accomplish anything for God it will be through unending opposition. We will never have peace until we give up trying to serve God and retreat into a world of make-believe and fantasy.

If we want God's power then we need to come out from among them and be separate and clean. We are commanded in scripture to seek fellowship only with those who call on the name of the Lord with a pure heart. We are commanded to not have fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. Read **Ephesians 5:11**.

2 Corinthians Chapter 7

2 Corinthians 7:1

What does it mean to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? Usually when we think about sin or filthiness we think in terms of the flesh. But what is filthiness of the spirit?

There is spiritual filthiness. Anything outside the gospel of Jesus Christ is spiritual filthiness. Every religion, philosophy, or system of self-enhancement is filthiness of the spirit. False gods, idols, philosophies, ideas, or religions. All these defile a person spiritually. It is one thing to be defiled by fleshly indulgence but what happens when a person is filthy in flesh and spirit?

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We must stay away from sins of the body and sins of the mind. The soul has an appetite for sin just like the body does. We must be clean from everything that contaminates the body, soul, and spirit.

Many times one leads to the other. If a person indulges in the sins of the flesh it will lead to filthiness in spiritual matters as well. If a person is filthy in the spirit it will lead to filthiness in the flesh. One leads to the other because a human being is not just a body and he is not just a spirit. God made man body, soul, and spirit.

The unbeliever has a dead spirit. He is unable to fellowship with God through the spirit. He cannot commune with God, he cannot fellowship with God. However, unbelievers are taught by demons how to commune with them through their dead spirit. We must flee all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The Lord Jesus saves us completely. God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him through Jesus Christ. He saves us body, soul, and spirit. Read **1 Thessalonians 5:23**.

2 Corinthians 7:2-4

Paul took comfort in difficulties because he knew his ministry to the Corinthians was God's will. He knew his work was done by the power of the Spirit. He knew he gave them the gospel which is the power of God for salvation. He could be joyful in tribulation because he knew what he suffered was worth the eternal investment in their lives.

He was defending himself and his team of coworkers who served this church. He said they wronged no man, corrupted no man, and defrauded no man. He did not defend himself to make them feel condemned. He reassured them that he loved them. It was only the minority, it seemed, who remained doubtful and critical of Paul. Paul could not leave those critics unchallenged.

What does it mean to die and live with people? It means he was committed to their best interests. He did everything for their benefit. His ministry was for their good, and not just their temporary good in this life, but for their eternal good.

Paul could be bold toward them because he knew his conscience was clear and his words and actions toward them was to help them. It was all for them so they could know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul comforted himself with the knowledge that his ministry was from God and through the power of God's spirit. He could be comforted with a clean conscience. He could be comforted in knowing he went the extra mile to help them.

Does our ministry comfort us in our trials? Can we say we know that even though we face insurmountable challenges that our hearts are at rest? We know we are in God's perfect will for our lives.

It is enough to know God is with us. He comforts us in all our trials so we can comfort others in their trials as well.

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

When Paul and his coworkers received news about the Corinthians from Titus they rejoiced. This joy came during hardship they faced in Macedonia. Paul described their hardship as "*without were fightings, within were fears*". This is a good description of most of the Christian experience while we walk in this fallen world.

There will always be attacks from the outside. We have Satan, fallen angels, and demonic powers arrayed against us. We have people who are puppets of the devil and demons who come against us. This evil is not always obvious. It could be as simple as someone who consistently irritates others or who consistently causes disruptions in the lives of other people.

As well as dealing with these problems from the outside we must deal with our own battles. There is a spiritual struggle which takes place in the mind and spirit. Our mind is attacked by the lies of the enemy in a multitude of ways. Even though we confess we are dead to sin, self, the world, and the devil this does not stop the enemy from harassing us. Indeed, it probably increases the activity of the dark powers in their harassment of our minds. I won't give examples but the alert Christian will know it when he experiences it. There is a supernatural fear that can come on us at times. I am reminded of how often Paul encouraged Timothy not to be afraid. He said God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and of a sound mind. So can fear be from an evil spirit? Absolutely. The enemy attacks by using fear, anxiety, and a multitude of other ways.

We overcome fear the same way we receive forgiveness of sins. We overcome by faith in the truth of the gospel. We take our stand on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We proclaim what God's word says. God placed us in his Son and united us with the Lord Jesus in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Read **Job 13:15**. Once we resolve the problem of death then fear can no longer keep us in bondage. Fear of death is the foundation of all other fears. When we are ready to die, then we have the strength to really live.

It does not mean we won't feel emotions but it does not have power over us. We can continue to live, and function, and continue the work God gave us. Sin no longer has dominion over me!

See in these verses how vital it is we live and work together with other believers. Paul could not make it on his own. He needed Titus, and Titus needed his fellow workers. Each person in the church needs

all the other people. We are fitted together by God like this. We are made to help one another and depend on one another.

2 Corinthians 7:8-10

What does Paul mean that he made them sorry but he did not repent though he did repent? This takes some slow meditation and consideration to pick out the thought. Paul wrote them a letter which made them sorry. The word "sorry" here would be like "grieved, sorrowful, sad, upset". He made them upset by his letter. He did not repent that he wrote them the letter. But he did repent in some respect. I think Paul is writing on two different levels at the same time. He is saying something in principle, but he is saying something also from a personal perspective. He is not sorry he wrote them the truth. It was the right thing to do. But many times when we do the right thing it will cause us to feel sadness because doing the right thing sometimes hurts people. It hurts peoples' feelings to be corrected or rebuked. Paul was sad that he had to hurt their feelings, but he was not sorry that he did the right thing in writing this letter. The letter was anointed by the Holy Spirit, yet Paul knew it would hurt them emotionally and he was sad they would be hurt.

He knew the letter would hurt them but only for a little while. It is similar to how when we get a cut and we have to apply alcohol or an antiseptic to the wound. It is the right thing to disinfect a wound, but it will hurt, even if just for a little while. It is a good pain which is meant to heal the problem of infection. In the same way Paul had to hurt them with the truth but only so they would be healed from the infection of sin in their church.

Now Paul had heard the result of his letter and he was glad. He was not glad they were hurt temporarily, but he was glad the result of his correction was their spiritual health. He rejoiced because their sadness or sorrow inspired them and brought them to repentance. They agreed with Paul and with the Lord that they were wrong and changed their mind to agree with the truth. Paul said this sorrow is a "godly" sorrow because it makes a person whole. It brings spiritual health to sorrow over sins and to turn away from self-worship toward God and truth. Since they did repent in a godly way they did not receive any permanent damage from Paul's application of the rod of truth to seat of their knowledge. They got over it and it was for their good which was the goal.

Now Paul explained something which opens spiritual understanding. If we grasp this it will give us discernment and help in dealing with people. Paul said their sorrow was a "godly" sorrow which worked in them repentance to salvation. However, there is another sorrow people experience when they are corrected. This is the sorrow "of the world" which produces death.

The natural reaction that an unbeliever has when confronted with truth is to justify self. An unbeliever will resort to anger and self-pity. Self-pity is a doorway to self-worship. When a person will not listen to truth or humble themselves they resort to defending self. They talk only of their feelings or emotions. There is no grasp on facts or truth. All this person has is the darkness of their self-defined reality. They worship self and will not bow their neck in the presence of truth. They feel sorrow but this is not a sorrow that brings them closer to God. This sorrow drives them further away from God and the truth. They do not want to hear the apostle speak. They want the prophet to shut his mouth. They will not listen to men who teach God's word. Instead they surround themselves with people who tell them what they want to hear. This is the broad highway to spiritual death and destruction.

Godly sorrow will not defend self. It will bow down in the presence of truth and humble itself and confess, "I am wrong, Lord. You are right, Lord. I am wrong."

The best example I can think of in the Bible is the account of Peter and Judas. Peter betrayed the Lord Jesus and the Bible said he went out and wept. Peter's sorrow at his betrayal was godly sorrow which led to repentance and salvation. Judas was sorry for what he did. He confessed he betrayed innocent blood. But what did Judas do? Instead of finding forgiveness Judas hung himself. He committed suicide. Worldly sorrow works death.

When a man defends himself in the face of persistent sin then he will inevitably display worldly sorrow which produces his death.

It is incredibly important that we humble ourselves always. Even if we think the person God used to correct us was wrong we should not defend ourselves. We should go to God in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the truth. Don't fight, argue, or defend yourself. Go to the Lord and ask the Lord to reveal the truth.

2 Corinthians 7:11

When the Christian sorrows "*after a godly sort*" he will have the same behavior as Paul listed here. There will be diligence, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and revenge. All these words, in context, were directed toward dealing with the problem of sin in an individual's life. When we deal with sin after this manner Paul says we are "clear in this matter".

Paul paints a picture for us with these words. It is a picture of Peter weeping after he betrayed Christ. It is a picture of David crying out to God that he would not take away his Holy Spirit from him. This is Solomon lamenting that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. This is Jeremiah weeping in the book of Lamentations. This is Daniel confessing his sins and the sins of his people Israel. This is Nehemiah grabbing the remnant in Jerusalem and pulling out their hair. This is Isaiah proclaiming woes upon himself because of his unclean lips. This is John falling down at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:9 says *if we confess our sins then God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Why do men refuse to confess? Why do men spend their energy defending their self and their ridiculous sins?

It is because men do not believe in God. They only believe in their own self. This is the tragedy of the fall of man.

When we turn away from unbelief and self-worship and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ then our eyes are opened, our ears can hear, and our heart can find joy in becoming clear with God in every matter of our lives.

2 Corinthians 7:12-16

Notice after all the tumult of this church and the sins this church had to deal with Paul stated explicitly that he now had confidence in them in all things. How is this possible?

It is possible because Saul of Tarsus was confronted with the living God on the road to Damascus. He was confronted with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. After this he was no longer Saul of Tarsus but became the apostle Paul. Paul knew that the Lord Jesus Christ can change a man completely.

Paul learned he could trust the Holy Spirit living in these Christians. This is an important lesson we must learn as we relate to brothers and sisters in Christ. Someone can go from being a drug addict on the street one day to being a saved, cleansed, and purified saint the next day. I know this for a fact because it happened to me.

Paul was confident in them because he knew who the Lord Jesus Christ was.

Never judge people according to their past sins. When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ he wipes out our past life of sin. We are no longer what we once were. We are no longer that man any more. Remember **2 Corinthians 5:17**, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*"

These Christians in Corinth were no longer what they once were. Paul could be confident in them because they were saints. This is the church Paul spoke to now. This was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul learned these men and women were the body of Jesus. How did he learn this? He heard the Lord Jesus ask him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul was persecuting Christians! But the Lord says, "*Why are you persecuting me?*"

Paul knew better than anyone that the people in the church were members of one body and that body is Christ. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Can you trust the Holy Spirit? Can you believe the Spirit of God in your brothers and sisters? We must believe the best of them. This is the attitude of love. Love always believes the best of people.

Believe in the Holy Spirit in your brothers and sisters in Christ. Say with Paul, "I am confident in you."

2 Corinthians Chapter 8

2 Corinthians 8:1-6

Why did Paul mention the churches of Macedonia? Why did he mention those churches were in a great trial of affliction and deep poverty? He said that despite their affliction and poverty they gave with joy to help support brothers and sisters in Christ. These churches did not consider their problems but were focused on the needs of others. Why did Paul use this example in his letter to the Corinthians?

The underlying issue with the Corinthians was self-worship. They focused on self. They followed the names of men, and compared themselves with themselves. They were Christians but their method of

life was like the world system. In order to shake them out of this Paul pointed out how other churches gave during a time of affliction and poverty. This example was not to condemn the Corinthians but to shake them out of focusing on self and think about the needs of other people.

I found out when I was a young Christian that the quickest route to overcoming my problems was to help someone else. I grew quickly in the Lord when I forgot myself and focused on serving. This was what Paul taught.

There was a need Paul tried to fill with the churches who would benefit from these material resources. There were people in need. They needed the support they could get from the Corinthians.

Paul described this process of giving and receiving as a "grace". He said that since other churches were setting an example he sent Titus to the Corinthians to complete this same "grace" in them. The "grace" here was the process of organizing the church in a way to make sure they had an opportunity to give to the needs of others. We have people like that today. There are ministries like "Samaritan Purse" which organize the church to give to the needs of others.

2 Corinthians 8:7-8

The Corinthians were blessed with spiritual gifts. They were blessed with faith, utterance, knowledge, and diligence, and in love toward Paul and his coworkers. Now Paul asked them to abound in the grace of giving. Paul qualified this by saying he was not commanding them, but was pointing out the example other churches set by giving. He asked them to prove the sincerity of their love.

It is easy to lift our hands, sing praises, speak in tongues, preach the word. It is easy to say we love people. But Paul said to put faith into action in a tangible way. This was putting faith into practice. It was one thing to be a Christian on Sunday morning, sing hymns, and bow our head, or lift our hands. It is another thing to be ready to help people during the week. Are we alert to the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ?

Ask yourself this question. Do you know of anyone that has asked for help? Did you turn them away? Did you delegate their need to someone else? Did you get involved or did you walk away? These are hard questions to ask ourselves.

In my opinion, this is also a test for Christians who have plenty of material resources. Sooner or later the Lord will bring people to their door as a test to see how they will react. Sooner or later that prosperous brother in Christ will get an unexpected call from another brother in Christ who is in need.

What will you do? Will you listen? Will you get involved? Or will you tell them to go talk to someone else? Will you say by your actions "God bless you and go away".

This is a serious question. We will stand before the judgment of Christ. What will the Lord Jesus say about us on that day? Well done or go away?

2 Corinthians 8:9

Jesus was rich? In what way? Materially? Do you mean Jesus had a lot of money, but he gave away his money so that his followers would become rich? How does that work?

It grieves me to confront this topic on the false gospel of prosperity. This gospel has leavened and infiltrated and taken control of most of the outward church in America.

I say outward in contrast to the "inward" church, because there is a real, inward spiritual remnant in America as well. They are not deceived by the charlatans on "Christian" TV who rake in millions of dollars to promote their false gospel of self-improvement.

These false preachers focus on the "here and now" but Jesus and the apostles never did. The gospel of Jesus Christ and his apostles always focused on what is eternal and not on what is here and now.

The gospel looks forward to the kingdom of God. It does not focus on self-improvement through having a positive attitude, positive confession, or through repeating positive affirmations.

I call these practices "Christian witchcraft" because it emphasizes spiritual law to the exclusion of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who teach spiritual law are teaching a self-centered message for people who are covetous and ignorant.

People deceive themselves by saying if God will give them a million dollars they will do a lot of good with it. Yet the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Read **1 Timothy 6:9**.

2 Corinthians 8:9 is not talking about material finances. This verse points to the incredible truth that Jesus Christ left heaven (the true riches), and came to earth. When he left heaven and came to earth he left his riches and became poor. And why did he come to earth? So that we could go to heaven! He became poor so we could become rich.

Paul used this example in the context of talking about material resources, so I can understand how people misconstrue Paul's illustration. But I cannot believe Jesus was materially rich on the earth. He preached against money on more than one occasion. He preached against being covetous. He preached on this topic over and over. He said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. There is no way Jesus could have preached this kind of message if he was materially rich.

Let's say, for a moment, Jesus was materially rich and gave it all away so we could be rich. Let's just consider this might be the correct interpretation.

So if Jesus gave it all away then why are we hoarding big bank accounts then? If Jesus gave it all away then we need to do the same thing, right? But those who preach this false gospel do not empty their bank accounts and feed the world. Instead, they buy themselves big cars, and big houses, and fancy clothes. They take money from the people of God and enrich themselves. They are covetous, proud, and blasphemers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are false prophets. People need to open their eyes and separate themselves completely from these false gospels and false teachers.

If Jesus was rich and then gave it all away when he started his ministry then he was living in disobedience until he was thirty years old? It just doesn't make sense to believe that Jesus was materially rich on earth. He was rich in heaven. He came to earth and was poor so he could fit in with the poor who would actually listen to the gospel! Read **James 2:5**.

2 Corinthians 8:10-15

The church in Corinth talked about sending financial help to their sister churches for a year and nothing was done. This sounds like people were all talk and no action. Paul now brought their talk into account and persuaded them by pointing at the generosity of other churches.

Read **2 Corinthians 8:11**. Get to work. Don't be a talker. Put your faith into action. I was taught as a young Christian how to take God's word, relate it to my life, and set goals to obey God's word. God's word is not just to fill your head with spiritual knowledge. It is instruction for right living. We need to consciously, actively, and aggressively look for ways we can apply God's word to life situations. Here is one verse that can help us. (**2 Corinthians 8:11**)

One key idea was this part "*that which ye have*". The Lord does not expect us to do anything but what we have in our hand. We need to consecrate our lives, our money, our possessions, our relationships, everything in our life: give it to God. He gave it all to us in the first place. Everything we have comes from God, and we should be ready to give to others what God gave to us. We will never out give God.

The idea of "*equality*" is underlined in modern America. However, unbelievers will never be able to implement a system of "equality". It is impossible because unbelievers are by nature self-worshippers. Unbelievers will always live for self first. They will always think and act in accordance with self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. This is why when governments try to impose a system of "equality" like communism or socialism it will always fail.

The only place men can come close to equality is within the confines of a Spirit-filled church. When people are sensitive to the Holy Spirit then they will be alert to the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who have material resources will give to help brothers and sisters who are in need. This is only possible in a church filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 8:16-24

Paul discussed practical arrangements he made with coworkers to secure the financial offering from the Corinthian church and transport it to churches who needed it.

Notice the phrase "*providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*". This is a principle of good stewardship. Always have open books when it comes to finances. Anyone should be able to see where the money goes, who handles the money, and how the money is managed. Always be transparent about finances. Not only be transparent about finances but also transparent about plans for the church, changes to be made, and the vision the leadership has for the future of a church. Nothing should be done in secret. Everyone should be well-informed of everything happening in a church.

I think it would be a good idea when there is a deacon's meeting that notes be taken during the meeting and then read to the congregation. This is another way people can be transparent and provide for things honest in the sight of God and men.

Perhaps it would help people in the church to know exactly what their leaders discuss and the plans they make. This would help people know whether or not they want to stay in that church or go

somewhere else. Nothing should be hidden. Leaders should be completely held accountable for all their words and decisions.

2 Corinthians Chapter 9

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Paul made sure the church in Corinth was able to get their financial contribution together. He was concerned that the offering be handled correctly. He sent an advance team to get it ready. By the time Paul arrived everything would be ready.

One idea I lift from these verses is the need for organization. When a lot of people work on a project it is a good idea to be organized. What is the overall project? The goal was to help Christians who were suffering through a famine in Jerusalem. Also Paul was getting Gentile churches to donate towards helping Jewish Christian brothers in Jerusalem. The church is not Gentile only. People believe today the church is only Gentiles. The church is Jew and Gentile together under one roof. The Lord Jesus made everyone one people in him when he died on the cross. It was the Jews who handed him over, but it was the Romans who nailed him to the cross. God's people are three in one: Israel, the church, and the kingdom.

We should be ready to do good works. The church should be alert to anyone who has need and look for opportunities to help people especially those in the house of faith. Read **Galatians 6:10**.

2 Corinthians 9:2

Here is another verse which 'prosperity' preachers enjoy abusing and taking out of context. If you hear someone always quoting this verse it is probably because all they know how to teach is spiritual law. Those who teach spiritual law usually neglect the most important thing we can ever teach anyone: the gospel of Jesus Christ. People are easily distracted from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, they invest themselves in spiritual law. The real motive behind teaching spiritual law is self-worship, self-provision, and self-protection. People employ spiritual law for their own self-interest and self-improvement. This is what I call "Christian" witchcraft.

A Christian is not a follower of self. If anyone teaches you how to improve your life then they are teaching a man-centered and self-centered message.

The gospel is not self-improvement. The gospel is about dying to self. The heart of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those who truly believe the gospel God takes them and places them into Christ Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. This means we die to self, to sin, the world, and the devil.

We are dead to self, which includes self-provision, self-protection, self-promotion. Those who have died with Christ and are raised together with him no longer live for self.

Instead, they live for Jesus and the gospel. They died and no longer live. Christ lives in them and through them to accomplish his goal. We see his goal clearly at Calvary.

In the context of this chapter Paul talked about the church in Corinth giving resources to help churches in Jerusalem who were suffering. Paul did not teach them if they gave 10 dollars they would get 100 dollars back from God. Paul did not teach that God was a cosmic slot machine.

Let's put this as simply as possible. Paul appealed to every point of argument he can come up with in order to get these Corinthians to do the right thing. He gave an illustration of someone who planted seed to reap a harvest. The picture was simple. The more seed we plant, the more crops we harvest. Paul said when we step out of self-interest and help others that God then will take care of us. Matthew 6:33. Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. All these other things will be added to you.

He was not teaching them a get-rich scheme. He did not teach a ponzi scheme which is what most of prosperity preachers turn this into. Sowing and reaping means there is a cause and effect relationship in life. If we are generous then God will see that we also are taken care of. When we die to self and live for Christ then we can rest assured the Lord will provide for us, he will protect us, and he will reward us with more of himself. Because he is what we really need. We don't need a million dollars. What we need is more of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 9:7

This was another of those Bible verses I learned early as a Christian. It was on a list of scripture memory verses given to me. As instructed I memorized this verse, related it to my life, and set goals to apply it. My goal at the time was to pay my tithes with a good attitude.

What does it mean that God loves a cheerful giver? I think it means that if you have a bad attitude when it comes to supporting the church or ministries then you should keep your money. A good example is the account of Ananias and Sapphira. They did not have a good attitude when it came to giving. Their motive was to give but keep back part of their gift for themselves. Their public actions were hypocritical. It did not line up with the motive of their heart. God saw what was in their heart and what they hid and he exposed them before the church. They died as a result of hypocrisy and lying to the Holy Spirit.

Recently I've thought about the part of this verse "*..or of necessity...*". What does it mean for someone to give of necessity?

I think one interpretation is that a person is being forced to give. They don't have a choice in the matter. They are condemned by church leaders and if they do not give they are brow beaten or threatened.

Another way to look at this is a person is deceived into thinking if they give 10 God will return to them 100. In other words, a person is deceived by the prosperity gospel. They are currently poor financially but they think if they just give \$10 then God has to give them back \$100. This is also, I think, *giving out of necessity*.

The bottom line is our motive should not be motivated by covetousness or by personal need. If we are in need then we should keep what we have. I know people would disagree with this by pointing to the poor widow and Elijah but I don't think what happened with Elijah and the widow is an example or precedent for giving in the church. I think what Elijah did was a one-time deal with that widow and was not some kind of Bible principle for giving. People get really screwed up by taking scriptures out of context like that.

A cheerful giver is someone who has enough that he can give to others. We should not give because we ourselves are in need and want to get a return on our investment. That is worldly thinking. We should always give expecting nothing in return. That should be our attitude. It is an attitude of giving with the motive of love. However, we also know the Lord will take care of us, no matter what. We should never let the devil stop us from giving because of the lie that we will run out or won't have enough for ourselves. God will take care of us. We should be willing to give to people who are in need if we have it.

Remember Peter and John said they did not have silver or gold but what they did have they gave. What did they give? They gave the gospel of Jesus Christ. They gave that crippled man Jesus!

We can always share the gospel with people. This is the best gift anyone can ever receive.

God loves a cheerful giver. Let us not be brought into bondage to rules which men create from church tradition about tithing. I think it is sad when people give out of grudging obligation. Ironically I think if churches did not create rules about giving 10 percent then people might actually give a lot more sacrificially in support of churches. People should be inspired by love in their giving. Give with joy. Give as unto the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

What grace was Paul referring to? "*Make all grace abound toward you*". I think Paul meant that he prayed they would be equipped for the ministry God called them to. God is able to make it so they will have everything they need to invest their life in the gospel.

Paul used the illustration of a farmer sowing seed, reaping a harvest, and then having more seed he could sow as a result of the harvest. Behind the sowing and reaping was God. He gave us seed and enables us to reap a harvest. Instead of focusing on spiritual laws of sowing and reaping we should instead turn our attention to God who gives everything and allows us to become more like him. He is the ultimate giver.

The process of giving and the ability to continue is from God. This should cause thanksgiving to the Lord. Helping others should not make us covetous or focused on what we can get in return, but instead it should cause our hearts to be lifted up in worship and thanksgiving toward the Lord who allowed us to participate in giving.

2 Corinthians 9:12-15

Paul outlined benefits the Corinthians received as a result of giving to the saints.

In a practical way their giving took care of real needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. Their gift would buy bread and food and supply material needs for the saints.

Another benefit was that it would cause people to give thanks to God for providing their needs. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray each day for their daily bread. God is our provider. When God answers our prayers and supplies our need we give thanks to God.

Also, it glorifies God when Christians put faith into practical action. By giving and helping others the Corinthians demonstrated their faith was real. It is a living faith that leads to practical action on the behalf of others.

Finally, when the saints received material help from the Corinthians it would inspire them to keep the Corinthian church in their prayers. As we pray for one another our hearts are tied together and the church grows as it should grow. When a Christian brother helps another Christian brother it can only further the cause of Christ and strengthen the bond of love between us.

We should never forget that the ultimate gift is from God himself. What is the ultimate gift from God? What is this indescribable gift? It is when God the Father gave his Son to be our atonement at Calvary. Christ died for our sins on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is the indescribable gift of salvation and eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians Chapter 10

2 Corinthians 10:1-2

Walking according to the flesh is exercising world system authority. There is a difference between spiritual authority and world system authority. Jesus taught his disciples worldly authority exerts dominion over people. Worldly authority creates a name for itself then builds power, position, and prestige in its own name by multiplying numbers underneath the name. Create a name and subject people underneath the name. This is how the world system works.

This is not how God's kingdom works. God's kingdom is like what Paul showed us here. He used the word "beseech" to the Corinthians. He tried to aggressively persuade them to do what was right instead of forcing them to do what was right. Paul's authority as an apostle was the same authority Jesus showed in his earthly ministry. There was a demonstration of God's power to heal, cast out devils, and preach the gospel. However, this authority was not used like the world uses authority to subject people underneath it like a worldly self-worshiping king. People in the world exert authority over others to build their name and power.

Paul said that the Corinthian troublemakers assumed he walked in the flesh like them. He did not walk in the flesh, or in the principle of the flesh, which is self-worship.

Paul turned around and said that he did walk in the flesh but Paul had a habit of using the same word to mean something completely different to create a sharp contrast. When in verse 3 he said he walked in the flesh he meant that he was still in a human body. He walked in the flesh in the sense that he was a human being in the flesh. It is important to follow closely when Paul makes these flip flops in the way he uses a particular word. It can be confusing if we are not tracking closely.

Notice in many of Paul's letters he did not command people so much as "beseech" people. He appealed to the conscience in those he wrote to. He wanted to persuade people to do the right thing, not because he said so, but because their conscience confirmed he spoke the truth. We should always appeal to the conscience because the truth is real whether or not people believe it. There are facts which exist outside ourselves which do not change. There are absolute truths which do not change no matter what men may think or suggest.

It is these facts we present and the Holy Spirit will use these facts to persuade men of the truth. The most important facts we can ever present to anyone is the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

The Christian's fight is not with people but with the powers of darkness which influences and controls the lives of people. People are influenced and controlled through propaganda and repetition of lies. At the heart of this war is the written word, the spoken word, and the living Word of God.

Paul said that though we live in natural bodies and walk on two legs like everyone the Christian does not engage in war the same way the world does. The nations go to war in order to gain power, prestige, and control. The Christian does not engage in spiritual warfare in order to gain power and control over other people. Instead, the Christian tries to influence others through his life, his actions, his attitudes, his prayers, and through his words. He hopes people will by their own decision submit themselves to God by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

There are several layers to this problem. The first is that people must understand that without God they are lost sinners. They are headed to eternity in a lake of fire. These facts are hard to convince men of because man in his natural state is full of pride and self-righteousness. He does not think he is all that bad. In fact, he thinks he is a good man, a good leader, or good employee. He thinks he is a good husband, or a good father. The majority of the time the word of God is completely lost on these kind of people. Those who think they are good will not listen to the gospel.

The gospel is for people who are convinced by the Spirit of God that they are sinners. They are evil. The heart is deceitful and wicked above all things. The philosophy and psychology of the world, however, teaches the exact opposite of this. The world teaches people to love their self. The world teaches people that their problems spring from a lack of love for their own self. They have a poor self-image. They don't love themselves enough. These are complete lies and deceptions to trap people into becoming hardened self-worshippers.

Self-worship is the heart of idolatry. When men bowed to idols in the ancient world it was because they believed that by doing so they would gain provision or protection. In modern culture men bow down to self. Men are proud of their self-reliance and independence. However, this is idolatry. Men are lovers of their own selves, as the apostle prophesied would happen more and more the closer we get to the end of the age.

What are the weapons of Christian warfare? Paul exhorted his son in the faith Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ". What do Christian soldiers use as weapons?

Begin with the Lord Jesus and the account of his temptations in the wilderness. What weapon did the Lord Jesus use to defeat the attack of Satan?

Jesus quoted the Bible. One of the greatest resources in defeating the power of the enemy is the Bible. I would like to add that a Christian does not need to know the logic of how unbelievers think. We do not have to fight this battle on the enemy's turf with intellectual arguments on science, evolution, and so forth. Instead, we engage the enemy on the ground of the gospel. Our part is to proclaim the gospel.

When the Bible talks of defending the gospel I take this to mean that we continue to proclaim the truth no matter what lies the enemy promotes. We do not engage the world on its terms. Instead, we engage the world on the terms of truth.

My part is to proclaim the Lord Jesus. I don't have to intellectually wrestle someone to the ground. Most of what we call apologetics, in my opinion, is more for people who are already believers rather than an effective tool in evangelism. It is more of a way of defending those who already believe the gospel against the infection of the devil's lies.

True evangelism is speaking God's word in a simple and potent manner. By preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ we will do more harm to the realm of Satan than anything else. All the debating with people accomplishes little compared to a humble man proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Paul talked about pulling down strongholds he described attitudes of unbelief which build up in the minds of people. We do not have to understand those strongholds. We simply tear them down by a continuous assault with the truth. I don't have to understand how salt is a preservative. I just put the salt on the meat and the meat is preserved. I don't have to understand how antibiotics heal me of sickness. I just take the pill. In a similar fashion, the proclamation of truth and the gospel repeatedly will tear down lies and strongholds in our own minds and also in the minds of those we serve.

You can try to argue with an atheist if you want to. But I am here to tell you that the darkness of unbelief is a deep pit. You can never get to the bottom of it. No matter what you say to an atheist they will always find reasons not to believe the truth of the gospel.

Our part is to preach and proclaim. Our part is to speak it, live it, share it. Let us not get weary in this work, either. I think a lot of people give up before they get started because they know they are not smart enough to argue with all of the falsely called science people embrace today. Here's the thing. We don't have to argue. Just give people the word of God. They can take it or leave it, that's not my responsibility. My part is to be faithful with what God gave me to do.

These verses in the Bible are important for Christians. It is important to understand that we cannot trust our imagination or mind. Our thoughts must be disciplined to submit to the truth of God's word. The flesh in us will continue to rise up in unbelief against the Bible. This is why every day we bring the flesh under subjection by blasting ourselves with truth through reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's word.

You might think that after twenty years of being a Christian that faith gets easier. It does not. If a man does not feed faith with God's word then he can revert back to idolatry and unbelief. It is like the law of gravity. The only way you can over ride the law of gravity is to stay inside the airplane. Step outside the airplane and you will drop.

May the Lord help us to be steadfast in this spiritual battle. It is a battle fought in the mind and in the thoughts. It is important what we think, what we listen to, what we put before our eyes, and it is crucial the people we hang out with and make agreements with.

2 Corinthians 10:7-11

Paul was criticized because of his physical appearance and also by a lack of polish in speaking. From this we can discern how carnal the critics were. Their pattern of judging someone in ministry was by how they looked and how well they spoke? People still do this today and it is a tragedy.

We have the example of David and Saul in the Old Testament to counter this worldly method of criticism. The Lord told Samuel when he anointed David that men will look on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. Would you rather be judged by your appearance or judged by what is in your heart? Men look at you from the outward but God looks at the heart.

The Corinthians should have known Paul's heart because Paul founded the church in Corinth. He built the church from the ground up by preaching the gospel. Paul gave his life. He never asked for financial support. Instead, he lived off donations from other churches. Paul worked making tents. Yet some of the Corinthians found reason to criticize Paul.

Where does this critical attitude come from? It is a weapon people use to tear down one man so they can take his place or take control of a situation. It is an attack to push out one so he can be replaced.

Paul was forced to defend himself for the sake of the church and the gospel. As we continue to read this letter it is striking how unwilling Paul was to defend himself but he did it in order to uphold the gospel and protect this church from wolves.

No doubt the religious leaders criticized Jesus in a similar manner. They could not put a dent in his message so they criticized where he came from or that he broke their traditions.

The gospel is disruptive because it takes control out of the hands of men and puts it back into the hands of God. When men are in control there will be division, strife, and controversy. The gospel will be ignored or diminished or replaced with self-help.

Let's think about Paul's statement that his authority was for edification. Let's compare this to **1 Corinthians 14:3**.

The purpose of speaking in the church is to edify, exhort, and comfort. We are to build, encourage, and comfort people in the church. This is the authority which we were given. Our authority in the church is not to tear people down or destroy people's lives. I've personally known people in ministry who did use their authority to destroy lives while at the same time saying they cared for people. They said their ministry cared for people. I shake my head in sadness at the deceitfulness of those who claim to work for God. Not all of them. Just those who make a name for themselves and promote themselves.

Our authority from the Lord is to preach the gospel to inspire and convince people that Jesus Christ is Lord. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Our lives and our message is to help people see this and be united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:12-16

The wolves who infiltrated the Corinthian church boasted in Paul's line of things which Paul already made ready to hand. In other words, Paul founded the church in Corinth and these wolves were coming

in trying to take over. Paul would have none of it. He confronted the impostors head on, and exposed their habit of measuring themselves against Paul and against one another.

When men compare themselves they have lost already. There is always someone we can point out and say we are better than. This is how worldly people exalt themselves. They exalt themselves by stepping on the backs of other people. They do this by tearing people down and making themselves look good.

In reality, there is only one measuring stick for the Christian and that is Christ himself. None of us can compare to our Lord and Savior, and so it is best we be quiet. When we compare ourselves to someone else it is because we are no longer looking at Jesus. Instead, we are looking at men. Those who look at other men are in reality self-worshippers. Followers after the names of men, and those who want to make a name of their own self are self-worshippers. A true Christian is not a self-worshiper but we worship the Lord God.

In these verses Paul expressed his hope that their faith would grow so they would be able to support his missionary work in regions beyond them. A growing faith, from the biblical sense, is seeing things according to how they really are, in truth, and in reality, rather than having our own vain imagination and visualizing how we want things to be. Everyone has distorted opinions, but a man growing in faith is laying aside his own thoughts and taking on more of the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus.

Faith sees reality, it perceives God's Kingdom, and takes hold on what Christ accomplished. Faith is when a man sees what is eternal and unshakable and lives in view of what he sees there. This is true, biblical faith.

When we see things in reality we will want to help anyone attempting to further the gospel. This was Paul's hope that they would see God's kingdom by faith and would help him to further the cause of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

Jesus noticed that religious leaders put themselves in the place of honor. They took the honor to themselves. Nobody gave it to them. They took it. They did this by religious acts in public and by sitting in places deemed to be for those in high esteem. God did not give these religious men these honors. They commended themselves.

Paul warned against this attitude. Those who live according to the principle of the world system seek to elevate self. They do this through titles, education, and climbing through man-made hierarchical systems.

Especially in the church it does not matter if a man commends himself, or if other people commend a man. The only servant in God's house who is of any value is the man whom God commends.

How do you find a man whom God commends? Who were the men in the Bible that God commended? Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, who else? What did all of these men have in common?

They had faith in God. They knew that they were sinners in need of a Savior. They all believed in God's promise which he made to Adam and Eve in the Garden about the Seed of the Woman who would some day crush the head of the serpent.

Don't seek the commendations of men. Seek commendation from God. Seek to be a man of God instead of a man of the world.

Many claim to know God but who does the Lord know? Does he know your name? Is your name written down in the Lamb's book of life?

Admit you are a sinner. Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, that he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians Chapter 11

2 Corinthians 11:1-2

The example I think of in the Old Testament was when Abraham made his servant swear to fetch a wife for his son Isaac. The servant swore to Abraham and traveled back to Abraham and Sarah's original homeland to find a wife for Isaac. This was an example of the Holy Spirit. Here Paul was used by the Holy Spirit to bring the church in Corinth to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. Paul said he wanted to present the church as a chaste virgin to Christ.

In the Old Testament when believers turned away from God to idols it was compared to sexual immorality. An unfaithful believer was compared to a harlot. This was an individual or group of believers who turned away from faith in God to idolatry. A chaste virgin was a group of believers who firmly held the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not turned aside by wolves in sheep's clothing who promoted a false gospel of self-worship.

The true gospel always points to God as our provider, protector, and portion. A false gospel will teach men to use spiritual law to provide for self, protect self, and also to elevate our name. A false gospel will inflate the self, but the true gospel teaches men to deny self. The true gospel teaches that Jesus Christ is our provider, our protector, and he is our portion. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. We lose our lives for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

Godly jealousy is in contrast to carnal jealousy. When someone has carnal jealousy they are selfish and want to control someone else. A person who has godly jealousy is interested in their beloved's best interests and in promoting their welfare. They have no desire to control the other person. They only want that person to do what is right so that God will be glorified and they will reach the judgment seat of Christ and receive their reward.

Paul called his speech here "folly" because he used human arguments like his critics. Base human arguments were all they could comprehend. We can tell it grieved Paul to use arguments and logic. He would much rather preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

Paul referred back to the account of the serpent and Eve in the garden of Eden. This account is in Genesis chapter 3. The account of Eve and the serpent is the foundation of understanding the condition of man and the world today. In Genesis 3 we see why mankind is like it is today. Man became one with the serpent when he took the side of the serpent against God's word. He believed the lie when he already had the truth. This is what men do today. They take the side of the lie instead of taking the side of truth.

Subtlety means cunning and craftiness. The enemy was cunning and crafty. He questioned God's word. The entire movement today within the church when you hear people talk about "having a conversation" is about questioning the truth of God's word. Men want to marginalize the word of God. They are taking the side of the serpent.

False teachers, false prophets, and false apostles present another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel. A good cross reference to this passage is the book of Galatians where Paul confronted this head on especially in **Galatians 1:6-9**.

I would be remiss if I don't pause here and mention some of the greatest false gospels and false spirits in America. These are the Catholic church, the Mormon church, and the Jehovah Witness church. All of these are the biggest cults in America that I am aware of. The danger with these cults is that they freely use the name of Jesus Christ. However, they all teach another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel.

Another cult in America is the prosperity gospel movement. This is harder to pin down because it is more of a grass roots movement instead of a brick and mortar church. From my own experience I saw this get started in charismatic churches, move to the Pentecostal and Assemblies of God, and now pretty much has taken over everything except the most fundamental churches like traditional Southern Baptist churches or Calvary Chapel. Churches who stress systematic Bible teaching seem to have the greatest resistance to these perversions of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 11:5-12

It is important that a minister not only preach the gospel but also live a life that makes it difficult for people to attack the gospel. Here Paul outlined a personal defense because when he was attacked the gospel was attacked. Paul's defense of himself was for the purpose of lending proper credibility to the gospel which he preached. He was not interested in defending himself because he was concerned about other people's judgment of himself. His defense was actually a defense of his message.

Our personal credibility is tied in with the gospel we preach. If our lives are inconsistent then we make it more difficult for people to believe the message. Our goal is to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything goes toward this goal. Our entire lives are involved in this goal.

We can read between the lines of Paul's defense and list some of the accusations which people leveled at him. He was not a polished public speaker, according to these critics. Paul preached the gospel freely and did not charge people money to hear him speak. In the minds of some this meant Paul was not worth listening to. It seems Paul was particularly disturbed by this last criticism and went into detail giving his motives for preaching the gospel to them free of charge. He did this so he could not be put in the same category as those who preached the word of God for money.

This should cause us to closely examine our motives in serving. Is our motive to make a living? Is this our ultimate goal? If the ministry quit paying us would we be tempted to quit? What is our goal? What is our motive?

Only the Lord can truly show us what is our motive in serving him. My prayer is that I may have a pure heart and a sincere motive in serving God. I do not want to build my life or other people's lives on the sand of self-provision, self-protection, or self-worship.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Paul was sincere in his comments on the critics at Corinth. He said they were not only critics but were false apostles and deceitful workers. This brought the situation to a whole new level. Not only was Paul being attacked but the church in Corinth was also under attack.

Paul said these men were deceitful workers and false apostles. They transformed themselves into apostles of Christ. If this was true then how much more true is it today?

A deceitful worker is someone who pretends to have the gospel as their main interest, but instead they change the gospel into something which is self-serving or which causes men to be covetous and greedy for gain.

Idolatry always boils down to self provision and self protection. When the purpose of the message becomes self provision and self protection then you know you are dealing with idolatry and man-centered ministry.

Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. He pretends he is on the good side and pretends to be a benefactor of mankind. He will always tempt men in a way to make men think he has their best interest at heart. He appeals to the pride in men. He appeals to the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These are the three areas he tempted Eve in the Garden, and it was also the three areas in which he attacked the Lord Jesus in the wilderness.

Paul defended the gospel against people who were not only critics but agents of the devil. We must realize that people who oppose the gospel are not just fallen men but are empowered and energized by the spirit of the devil. Indeed, all people who do not know the Lord Jesus or believe the gospel are instruments of Satan. Read **Ephesians 2:2**.

The Bible makes it plain that every person who is not a Holy Spirit filled Christian is filled with the spirit of the devil. That is hard to wrap our head around but it is written in **Ephesians 2:2**. This is not the only place the Bible makes it clear that mankind is divided into two separate groups. Men are devil worshipers or they are God worshipers. There is no in-between. Man does not live to himself. He is a servant. He is either serving Satan by serving himself, or he is a servant of God.

These pretenders in the Corinthian church transformed into ministers of righteousness. However, Paul said God would judge them according to their works. God will judge because he sees the true motive in the hearts of men.

Keep in mind that part of Satan's deception is to transform himself into an angel of light and into a minister of righteousness. The closer to righteousness Satan can imitate the more deadly is the deception.

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Paul presented his credentials which proved his apostleship and his sincerity as a minister of the gospel. What were his credentials? If he were alive today and listed these credentials on a resume he would not get his foot in the door of any church. My point is that our values and what we hold as proof of a man's calling and ministry have departed from the Bible's list of credentials. A man with a piece of paper, what Paul called "commendation", is all one needs today. All we need is a piece of paper from an educational institution saying we completed their courses and are therefore qualified to serve in ministry. My question is this: who gave that educational institution their authority to issue that piece of paper?

This is how the world system deceives people. They deceive people with pieces of paper, with their credentials, which they claim gives them authority.

There is, however, no authority except what God gives men.

Paul was called to an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ. He lists here the credentials of his ministry. Let us outline these credentials: religious background, good family and a pedigree, stripes, prison, death threats, beatings, stoning, shipwreck, threats from Jews and Gentiles in the city and in the country, threats from fake brethren, hunger, thirst, and exposure. I don't think my list does justice to what Paul described. What would we think if someone applied to be our pastor with those things on his resume?

Our ideas of ministry are far, far away from what these men of God experienced.

2 Corinthians Chapter 12

2 Corinthians 12:1-6

Without going into detail we learn a lot from Paul's description of his spiritual experience. Consider the context and why Paul brought this subject up in the first place. Paul was confronted by what he described as false apostles and deceitful workers. Paul's defense was to state his credentials, not because he wanted to defend himself, but because he wanted to defend the gospel. He tried to protect the Corinthian church from the influence of impostors who crept in and attacked him.

Paul described a spiritual experience to further illustrate his authority to speak on spiritual matters. Even in the way Paul described this he was struggling and reverted to speaking in the third person. He acted like he might be talking about some unknown, anonymous man but was describing his own spiritual experience. The conflict in Paul's heart is evident by how he structures this description. He described visions and revelations as if it happened to someone else.

Paul gave us a few items to think about from the spiritual realm. From Paul's description we learn there are at least three heavens. Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven. I've heard speculation on what the first and second heaven are but I don't think anyone truly knows.

Paul made it clear what he heard was not lawful to talk about. It was not lawful to describe what he heard in that place. This is interesting because we do hear about people who say they went to heaven or hell and came back to describe their spiritual experience. Paul's description of his spiritual experience casts on people who go into graphic detail about their spiritual experiences. I'm not saying it is not possible for people to have these experiences. I'm inclined to believe that some people have had genuine spiritual experiences with the Lord and were sent back to give a testimony. However, it is always interesting to compare Paul's lack of detail here with what you hear from people today about their experiences. Why? Why was Paul so reluctant to talk about the spiritual world that he saw and heard? He said it was not lawful. What does that mean? Does it mean it simply is not possible to accurately describe the other side? Or does it mean that God did not permit Paul to repeat what he heard and saw?

Paul did not want to boast in himself when it came to spiritual visions. Instead, he would rather people come to their own conclusion about him. He didn't want people to think more highly of him than they should. After all, Paul knew he was just a messenger of Christ. It was not the messenger who was important but the message he carried. What was really important was the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've learned reading this passage to be careful about sharing spiritual experiences. It is much better, instead, to focus on the message God gave us. It is much better to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ rather than our experiences with him. Just as Paul said elsewhere that we are to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves only as servants of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

There is a danger when receiving revelations because a man can become proud of his spiritual knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 8:1 Paul wrote "*Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*". It is dangerous when a man receives visions from the Lord.

The Lord will allow challenges to keep a man humble, especially when the man is a chosen vessel to preach the gospel like Paul. Paul needed to receive revelations, not for himself, but for the church to be edified and built up. When we receive understanding, insight, and revelation from the Lord it is not for ourselves only. What we receive from the Lord is for the purpose of building up the church. Why does the tree bear fruit? It is not for itself but so others may benefit.

The problem is that a man thinks he is better than others if he has an experience with the Lord. If he receives revelation and understanding he might think he is special or better than his brothers. This was why Paul taught on the body of Christ so each member will not think highly of himself. We belong to one another. No man in the church exists by himself. We are called to minister to one another and build one another up in the faith.

Anyone can be afflicted by pride. Pride will separate us from one another. Pride will isolate us. Pride, in its culmination, will make a man insane, just like the devil.

The Lord wanted to protect Paul. So he allowed a terrible affliction in Paul's life. Paul described this problem as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. People try to explain Paul's thorn in the flesh as a physical affliction, and perhaps that is true. However, Paul specifically described this problem as a

messenger of Satan. There was a real spiritual attack on Paul's life. It was an attack he could never get away from. The Lord allowed this so Paul would always feel weak and feel a need for God's grace.

The Lord told Paul his grace was sufficient. The Lord's grace is sufficient for us, too, only we are many times too proud to even feel our need of it.

May the Lord deliver us from pride. May he do what is necessary to keep us humble and always aware of our constant need for his mercy and grace.

2 Corinthians 12:11-13

The signs of an apostle listed are patience, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. When Paul gave this list he was defending the gospel and not just his ministry. In this context if Paul's ministry were to be discredited then the gospel of grace would be discredited. Paul could not allow wolves to destroy the work of the gospel. He was forced into a position of defending his calling, ministry, and ultimately the gospel.

Paul said his ministry was not inferior to the chief apostles even though he considered himself as nothing. It is difficult to track Paul because he says one thing and then turns around and sounds like he is contradicting himself. It is not a contradiction. He is speaking on different levels of meaning at one time. He said he considered himself as nothing. He was not interested in building his reputation. At the same time he could not allow his ministry to be discredited because this would endanger the gospel.

The Lord provided miracles through the apostles. We see this in the book of Acts. You may hear preachers today say that those miracles the apostles did have passed away since we have the complete written Bible. They said since we have the Bible there is no need of miracles.

If we apply that logic to the early church we could say they did not need miracles either because they had the completed canon of Torah. The logic does not hold up.

Signs, miracles, and wonders still happen. Of course, since we live in an age of deception and delusion much of what we see that appears supernatural is part of Satan's plan to sidetrack the church. I've seen this personally in my own life. I've seen people flocking after men who claim supernatural powers, but who preach something that does not line up with the Bible.

Be careful with the supernatural. Satan can deceive people with the supernatural. There will be more supernatural deception taking place the closer we get to the end.

Having said that I do not believe signs, wonders, and miracles no longer happen. I do not believe we need to throw out the supernatural power of God because we have a completed Bible.

I also underline the importance of interpreting everything through the lens and framework of scripture. When a man experiences the supernatural he should seek God through the written Bible to put that experience to the test. We are commanded in the Bible to test the spirits to see if they are from God.

An apostle, according to Paul's argument, will have a ministry associated with the supernatural.

I do not think it is wise to claim to be an apostle or a prophet in public before the church. Instead, if that is a man's gift walk in it but be reluctant to talk about the supernatural. Paul was forced to do so in this context. He was forced to talk about these things because the gospel was at stake. We should never attempt to promote ourselves, our name, or attempt to build a ministry by telling stories of supernatural experiences. To build our name or ministry on the foundation of the sensational is a recipe for pride and destruction.

Instead be steadfast in walking in humility and preaching the gospel.

2 Corinthians 12:14-21

Paul confirmed his travel plans to visit them. He reaffirmed that he did not want anything from them, but instead wanted them to have the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to win them all to the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to surrender completely to the gospel: Christ died for our sins on a cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

The apostle saw himself as a parent to this church. He was like a parent who saved up so that his children could have a better future. Paul was not interested in what this church could give him but he was interested in what he could give them. Paul did not want to be cut off from giving to this church all that the Lord gave him.

He was glad to give his life for them, even though he could see that the more he gave the less they gave back. They were like spoiled children that the parents gave everything to but who did not learn how to reciprocate. The worst kind of children are those who benefit from their parents materially but grow up and abandon the parents who gave them everything. These are the worst kind of people.

Paul said he spoke before the Lord when he told them that everything he did was for their benefit. Paul was not interested in himself but did everything so they could benefit. After all Paul did there were still people who did not repent but continued to live in sin.

2 Corinthians Chapter 13

2 Corinthians 13:1-4

We are weak in him but we shall live with him by the power of God.

To understand this we need to read all Paul's letters and all the gospels, and the books of Acts, and Revelation, and then all the Old Testament. We must put this in context.

One way to put things into context is to search the Bible for other places where Paul mentioned that a believer was "in him". Where did Paul teach a Christian was someone "in Christ". A good starting point is **1 Corinthians 1:30**.

God the Father placed us into Christ Jesus. When did he do this? When we believed the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus we were placed into Christ. We were united with the Lord in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

This was why Paul said *"we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you."*

A life outside Christ is lived for self. Someone who does not believe the gospel lives for self. They worship self and devote their energy to self-provision, protection, and self-love.

However, to be weak in Christ means we are unable to function as the world system anymore. We can't live like the world. We are ruined for this world. We were crucified with the Lord Jesus by the Roman soldiers. The world system and the religious system killed Jesus. When Christ died we died with him. We die daily for the same reason Christ died. We no longer fit in with the spirit of the world system anymore.

We live now by resurrection power. We are able to infect other people with spiritual life. When we live around people they can sense this. They can feel the Spirit of God living in us and through us. For some people this causes them to hate us. For others they are drawn by the Holy Spirit to believe the gospel.

Paul was making his third trip to the church in Corinth. He quoted here something out of the law of Moses. It was a quote in regard to the court system. When two or three people had a testimony which agreed then it was established as truth in a court of law.

In a similar way, Paul said this third visit would be confirmation of the gospel he preached. He was, in a way, giving them an ultimatum to believe the gospel. Get in or get out. Make your decision. What are you going to believe? How will you decide? Like Joshua said, *"As for me and my house we will trust in the Lord."*

2 Corinthians 13:5-9

Part of the Christian life is reviewing and examining our life. Does our life line up with the scriptures? When we find areas of our life that does not line up with scripture we need to confess this to God. We need to acknowledge that we are wrong and that God is right. We need to take the side of truth even against ourselves. We need to agree with God that he is right and we are wrong. The moment we resist and defend ourselves against truth we are backsliding. We are backsliding into darkness and unbelief when we defend self.

This is difficult at times. However, we have the promise from the Lord Jesus that if we abide in his word then we are his disciples indeed and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. The Lord Jesus himself is the way, the truth, and the life. As we walk with the Lord he will point out things in our life which need correction as we are able to bear it. He corrects us in his mercy. He puts his finger on things in our life that will cheat us out of our full reward. We should thank God that he condescends to bring circumstances and people and his word into our path to stop us and turn us around. He puts up road blocks to stop us in our tracks. He makes us think about what we are doing.

There has never been a time in my life when I sinned that God didn't put up a warning sign or a roadblock. If we continue to walk in sin it is because we are stubborn. All sin flows from a heart of unbelief and pride.

Examine ourselves! Does this mean we sit around feeling sorry for ourselves? No, it does not mean this. Examining ourselves should be a time of frank confession to God that we have gone astray. When

we confess to God and bring it into the light then the Lord can help us overcome. If we are not willing to talk it over with the Lord then how can we expect to find victory?

For some they may have walked in an area of defeat so long they no longer believe God can deliver them from it. But the Lord has all power in heaven and on earth to help us. This is the same God who created the universe. He parted the Red Sea for Israel. He was with the Hebrew men in the fiery furnace. He was with Daniel in the lion's den. He delivered Jonah out of the belly of the great fish. He is the same God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Nothing is too difficult for God. He can set us free from every sin. He can deliver us from every area where we suffer defeat. The Lord is able to save us to the uttermost.

Do not give up believing God's word and his promises. Press on to find victory in every area. Do not be satisfied with the bare minimum of God's promises, but press on to take hold on all the Lord has for you.

My cry today to God is that he would give me a pure heart and clean hands. My prayer is that I may walk before the Lord in righteousness and in holiness. My prayer is that I can be filled with a greater measure of his Holy Spirit. My prayer is that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

2 Corinthians 13:10-14

In Paul's final greetings he included a glimpse of God three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Paul touches on the trinity of God. He mentioned the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Through scripture from Genesis to Revelation we see God revealed himself as God three in one. There are three persons in the unity of one God. He is one God in three persons.

In 2014 when the Lord came near to me I automatically knew he was God three in one. Anyone who truly experiences the presence of God or hears his voice will know this about the Lord. They will know this when they hear his voice.

Anyone who denies the trinity nature of God is denying that Jesus Christ is God. If God is not three in one then how could Jesus be God? An attack upon the three in one nature of God is an attack on the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is not God then his death on the cross could not save us. It is only as Jesus is both God and Man that he can provide a satisfactory sacrifice for God. God can only be satisfied by his Son dying on the cross for our sins. No one else could do this. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to take on himself the sin of the whole world. He is worthy. No one else is worthy.

I am thankful for this book of Second Corinthians. Out of all the problems Paul confronted in this church we learn much about God, his plans, and how the church should worship and serve God.

The Epistle to the Galatians

Galatians Chapter 1

Galatians 1:1

Paul was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He became an apostle by God's will. Paul did not become an apostle because he said he was or because other men said he was. He became an apostle when the Lord Jesus Christ called him.

Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians. He already killed Christians or put them in prison. He was there when Stephen was martyred and approved of that murder. What kind of man was this? He was a killer. He was a religious fanatic. When confronted by the Lord Jesus he went from being a killer to an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing is impossible with God. We should never write off anybody.

What is an apostle? The word means messenger. It is someone set aside for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Paul defended himself against his critics at Corinth he listed some of the credentials of an apostle. Read **2 Corinthians 12:12**.

A biblical apostle has a ministry associated with supernatural acts from God. This should not surprise us. How supernatural was it for God to raise his son Jesus Christ from the dead? If you can believe this then you should be able to believe everything else in the Bible.

Paul did not become an apostle by the authority of man. This should cause us to consider how men are called to ministry. God did not call Paul to the ministry because he was educated. Paul wrote in his letters that he counted everything as rubbish compared to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This was not book knowledge. Paul described experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew Jesus as a real person. He knew him because God spoke to him. God called him by name.

This is what we need. We need men who hear from God and who were put in ministry by God instead of man.

It is important to keep in mind the source of Paul's authority. Paul gave his credentials up front for a purpose. He did this because the Galatians needed to take him serious. They were in big trouble because false apostles came in and turned them away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. They needed to believe Paul was a man of God with a message from God.

People need to know those who preach God's word are men of God. Those who preach the gospel need to act like it. They need to live godly lives of humility, sacrifice, and obedience. We need to cut the legs out from under the false preachers in mega churches. We need to live a holy, humble, pure life which is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We need an anointing which will produce the fear of God in those we preach to. Our lives should radiate the fear of God so men will surrender to the gospel.

Galatians 1:2-3

Paul was not alone in ministry. He had a team who worked with him. This team provided a network of material resources and prayer support. Paul mentioned people on his team by name but here we get a mention of "all the brethren which are with me". Paul was not alone in spreading the gospel. We should not be alone either. The Lord chose twelve disciples. Paul worked with a team. The Lord sent his disciples to preach two by two. What do we learn from this?

Ministry is not a one man show. Develop a mindset of working with people. We are not independent in our work and our work is not just for individuals. We are called to edify, exhort, and comfort the church. The church is not just one individual. The church is many people who agree that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This gospel is true whether or not anyone believes it, but those who do believe comprise the church. These are the people we walk with and serve.

Paul extended grace and peace to the Galatians. Grace is a term borrowed from Greeks. Peace is a distinctly Jewish word. Paul used the words grace and peace and by this we understand the church is Jews and Gentile together in Christ. The church is not only made up of former Gentiles, but also includes Jewish people. The church is Jew and Gentile. The Bible came from the pen of Jewish writers. How could anyone say that God was finished with Jewish people? If God is finished with the Jew then what assurance do we have that a day may come when he is done with Christians?

God's people are three in one, like God himself. God's people are Israel, the church, and the nations in the kingdom. In each God called a remnant to comprise his spiritual people. These are the people who believe in the seed of the woman, the Messiah who crushed the head of the serpent.

Galatians 1:4-5

Jesus gave himself for our sins. John the Baptist pointed at the Lord Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John saw the sacrifice of the lamb was not only for Israel but for everyone who believed in the seed of the woman who crushes the head of the serpent. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried, and then he rose again on the third day.

Why did Jesus die on the cross and rise again? He told his disciples as he went to the cross to be of good cheer because he overcame the world. What does it mean that Jesus overcame the world? What does it mean "*that he might deliver us from this present evil world*"? What is the world?

Comparing one scripture to another I understand that the "world" is a system which is independent and opposed to God. It is a way of living on earth that is independent of the creator of the earth.

The outward machinery of this system is government, business, and society. The evil spirit in this machinery is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

This world system is a shadowy counterfeit of God's kingdom. Satan, through his union with fallen man, constructed a system that emphasizes man's physical need and suppresses man's spiritual need. It mocks, scorns, and ridicules the spiritual man, but it esteems and lifts those whose goal is self-provision, self-protection, and self-promotion.

How did Jesus overcome this world system? He overcame by living in direct contradiction to it. Notice how when crowds wanted to make Jesus a king he would evade them and disappear from the scene? Notice how he told his disciples to keep quiet about who he was. He told the people he healed to keep it quiet. Why? Because miracles make a man famous. They give a man a big name. Miracles are good public relations. However, Jesus walked in contradiction to this. He walked in opposition to the principles of the world system.

Then he took the authority his Father gave him and laid down his life. He died on a cross. He gave himself for us. This is completely anti-world system. The law of the world system is to love self, provide for self, and protect self. Yet we see the Lord Jesus died and gave himself so others could live. He died so we could live. He overcame the world and destroyed the work of Satan.

There is much more in the gospel than forgiveness of sins. He is the Lamb slain so our sins could be washed away. He also gave himself so we could be delivered from this present evil world system.

How are we delivered from this present evil world system? We are delivered in the same way we receive forgiveness of sins. We put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we gaze on him and look on him we are conformed to him. The more we become like him the less the world has power over us. We no longer live for self. As we die to sin and live for God we are set free from the principles of the world system which is self-worship.

When we died with Christ we lost our self-life. Therefore the power of sin no more has power over us. The law of sin controls someone enslaved to self-love. When we die to self we are no longer under the dominion of sin, the world system, or the devil.

Now we belong to God. He is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion. He is our reward. He is all we need for this life and the next.

Jesus did all this according to the will of God. God's will for us is the same as it was for the Lord Jesus. We lay down our lives so other people can hear the gospel, and believe, and be saved. We lay down our lives so others can be delivered from this present evil world system.

Galatians 1:6-7

Paul was astonished at what happened to the Galatians. He heard they had removed themselves from the Lord. They turned their back on the gospel. They stopped embracing the gospel Paul preached. When we stop believing the gospel it is not just intellectual. It is not just religious. It is personal.

How is it personal when someone turns his back on the gospel? Because of the price that was paid. The Lord Jesus gave his life on the cross for us. To turn away from this gospel of the Lord Jesus is to make a personal attack on the Lord Jesus. It is personal. We cannot separate the gospel from the Lord Jesus. We cannot separate the Bible from faith in Jesus.

Not only did they remove themselves from him, the Lord Jesus, but they did so "soon". This was a quick move. They did not allow themselves time to consider their actions but soon removed themselves. They moved with haste and with no thought to turn their back on the gospel and remove themselves from a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did they turn their back on Jesus? They probably did not think of it that way. We never stop to consider that if we embrace a philosophy or system or program or religion that we are in essence rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't consider our actions in that light. Instead, we pride ourselves on being open-minded and international in our embrace of other cultures and religions. We are so full of pride and love for our ourselves. We have slapped the Lord Jesus in the face. We pulled out his beard. We screamed "crucify him!"

Rejecting the gospel is personal to the Lord Jesus Christ. Replacing God's word with philosophy, psychology, or religious systems is rejecting the gospel. Replacement is rejection. Adding to the gospel is rejecting the gospel. Adding a program to faith in Jesus is rejection of Jesus.

Jesus does not want us to follow a system, a religion, or any steps of self-improvement. We do not need to save ourselves. Jesus did it all when he died on the cross, and was buried, and rose again the third day. He did it all.

This new gospel is not a gospel at all. It is not good news to hear that we have to work at saving ourselves. This is not good news. It is not good news to find out that I just need faith in self or need to love myself to overcome my problems. This is not good news. Why? Because I am not worthy. I am a sinner. I am an evil person, and so is everyone walking on this earth. Evil to the bone. There is only one who is worthy and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not good news to hear I have to follow religious steps of self-improvement. It is not good news to hear that I have to tell other people my problems when they have the same or worse problems. That is not good news because they cannot help me. They cannot help me and they cannot help themselves. Putting us together in a group will not help us. It will only change us into something worse.

What is worse than being an alcoholic or a drug addict? It is worse when we codify and embrace self-love and self-worship. In essence, we cast ourselves into concrete in the embrace of the serpent. We make an agreement with other people that we will hold hands and reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. We reject God's free gift of eternal life through his son Jesus Christ. Instead, we adopted another gospel of believing in ourselves, loving our selves, and confessing our sins to people instead of to the only one who can forgive our sins.

The only one who can forgive us is the one who died for us on a cross. No one else can help us. People might make us feel good for a while. They might ease our conscience for a while. But the price we pay is to walk into a darkness that we will never find our way back out from again.

There is only one gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. All other religions, philosophies, psychology, science, and programs are man-made lies of the devil.

Galatians 1:8-9

Paul pronounced a double curse on anyone who preached another gospel than the one he preached. This might sound like Paul had no love for people when he said this. Paul's love was for the people who would be potentially deceived by a false gospel. It is not enough for Paul to warn people against listening to false gospels but he called on God to curse those who brought a false gospel. Notice it was not only a curse on the false gospel but on the messengers of the false gospel. Those who deceive

others with false teaching, false doctrine, and a false gospel will suffer the consequences of their deception.

I cannot read this without thinking about Mormons. This verse points directly at this modern false gospel which even boasts itself that it is "another gospel". God's curse is on the false gospel of the Mormons and it is also on anyone who promotes that false gospel. We should pity those young people who are deceived into riding bicycles through neighborhoods and knocking on doors. We should pity them because they are under the curse of God for spreading a false gospel.

This is a good reason to make sure we stay within the boundaries of the gospel and not stray away. It is dangerous for Christians to preach politics from a pulpit. This is dangerous because social issues, politics, and these topics will not save anyone.

These things have their place, but for the preacher of the gospel it is best to stick with the gospel. We are called to teach and preach the word of God. Jesus said if we abide in his word then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Truth cannot be found in social causes or politics. That way leads only to confusion, pride, and anger. That path leads us into strife, division, and being confounded.

The kingdoms of this present evil world belong to the devil. Our citizenship is in heaven. We need to focus on what is eternal and not what is temporary.

The most loving thing Paul could do in this situation is to call for a curse on this false gospel and the false messengers.

Galatians 1:10

Why can't Paul please men and please God at the same time? In the gospel there can be no compromise. We must present the message God gave us. It is God's gospel that is his power to save men.

This brings up the topic of man-pleasers. Why do men want to please men rather than God? A basic reason is that God is invisible and men are not. It is easier to accommodate what we see, hear, feel, taste, or touch. It is easier to live by the five senses rather than by faith. It is more difficult to walk by faith than it is to walk by sight. However, the consequences are worse for those who are men pleasers.

What is a man-pleaser? In the context of the gospel a man-pleaser is someone who changes the gospel message to accommodate man's pride and vanity.

A man pleasing gospel will focus on the here and now rather than what is eternal. A man pleasing gospel will give instructions for men on how to improve their life in this evil world system. It will teach men how to be successful and how to be happy. It will teach men how to succeed in the world. It will teach men how to make a name for themselves. It will teach men how to be proud of themselves. It will teach men how to be self reliant and love self.

As we see in Galatians the false gospel creeping into the church compromised with the Jewish religion. Men taught their own traditions based on the law of Moses. The purpose was to make a name for self and bring people under the control of religious leaders. This was the situation when the Lord Jesus

appeared and rebuked the religious leaders. Why did they want to kill him? Why did his presence create this hatred that resulted in murder?

The gospel sets men free from religion. It sets men free from rules and laws. It sets men free so they can serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the cost of living in the Spirit is losing control of one's own life. A man can no longer be in control. He must surrender control of his life to the Holy Spirit. Man is no longer at the center of his life. Now the Lord Jesus is at the center. Jesus is the ruler of his life. This does not sit well with men. Men do not want the Lord Jesus to rule their lives.

They don't mind religion. Religion can be molded into the image of man and used to control people. But the Lord Jesus cannot be controlled. The Holy Spirit cannot be boxed, categorized, and controlled. If man cannot control something he doesn't want anything to do with it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ pleases God but it does not please men. Those who preach the gospel will always be opposed by the world system and the religious system. There is no getting around this.

Paul said if he pleased men he would not be a servant of Christ. Anyone who is interested in serving God in ministry must overcome the fear of man and the tendency to be man-pleasers.

Galatians 1:11-12

Certify! We have a certificate of authenticity from Paul and from the Holy Spirit that the gospel Paul preached was not from man and Paul did not learn it from man but received it from the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus taught Paul through revelation. We think of John as the one who saw the revelation of Jesus Christ but Paul also received revelation from Jesus Christ.

Even though men have a Bible they cannot know God except by revelation. We can read the Bible all day and not comprehend it unless the Holy Spirit opens our understanding. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to give us revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without revelation from God we cannot understand the things which are given to us by God.

We know the reason Paul stressed the divine origin of the gospel was because he was attacked and there was an attempt by false teachers to subvert the gospel. The letter to the Galatians was Paul's defense against this false gospel.

The gospel is from the Lord Jesus. This message was outlined as the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is this message important? Because through faith in the work of Christ a man receives eternal life. It is through faith in what Christ accomplished that we receive eternal life. He who has the Son of God has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Unless we have faith in Jesus alone we cannot be saved. We cannot confess Christ and other religions or philosophies. We cannot hold the religions of the world and hold the gospel at the same time. The longer we hold the gospel the clearer this becomes. The gospel is completely opposed to all the religions of the world. It is in direct contradiction to idolatry.

There is no compromise between the gospel and the religions of the world. The specific battle which Paul faced in this letter was against Jewish traditions and legalism. The principle holds true for us today against any form of religion or philosophy which exalts itself against the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:13-24

Paul's "*conversation in time past*" pointed to his lifestyle before he was a Christian. Before he was saved Paul was a persecutor of Christians. His history can be traced in the book of Acts. Paul covered his history with the Galatians for a reason. He tried explain that what he preached was not something he learned in his past as a Pharisee. It was not something he learned from man. He went into detail to provide his personal history after the Lord Jesus saved him on the road to Damascus. After Paul was saved he didn't go to Jerusalem. People were scared of Saul of Tarsus for good reason. Saul of Tarsus was at the execution of Stephen. Paul went to the desert of Arabia. While he was there in isolation for three years the Lord Jesus taught him. The Lord taught Paul the gospel and everything we read about in his letters.

It was important for Paul to share these details so the Galatians would understand Paul was not an apostle sent by man. He was an apostle sent by God. If a man is sent by God we should receive him as a messenger from God.

Most people do not receive someone unless that person has a big name. A big name means the person has fame, or credentials, or graduated from an institution. In the world these things make a difference. In the true church of Jesus not so much. People practice in the church what they see in the world. They think leaders in the church should be appointed like people in business or how government appoints people into leadership. They think leaders should have certificates and titles. They think church leaders should have big names and be important so people will follow them.

This is not the true church of Jesus. The true church follows the Lord Jesus because they love him. Men who serve the church are leaders because of love and humility. They teach others to be like Christ by example, actions, attitudes, and words. Our teaching is the overflow of a life surrendered to the Lord Jesus.

I've heard people say God chose Paul because he was educated in Jewish theology and that he would make a good teacher of the gospel. That is not the truth. Paul said God chose people not because of their strength or intelligence. Read **1 Corinthians 1:27-29**.

Why did God choose Paul to be an apostle? It was so no one could say they were too far gone for God to forgive and cleanse. God chose Paul because he was one of the worst men anyone could think of. He was a murderer and a religious hypocrite. He was a zealous Pharisee who would have taken part in handing Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. Read Paul's own words in **1 Timothy 1:12-16**.

Galatians Chapter 2

Galatians 2:1-2

Paul continued with details of his biography. The purpose in sharing these details was to demonstrate that the gospel was not taught to him by man. He did not receive the gospel from man, but received the gospel by revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's authority in the gospel was important because an attack on God's messenger was an attack on the gospel. Paul needed to present his details in order to verify the gospel was from the Lord.

He covered a lot of his personal life. He skipped ahead fourteen years to his conversion and three years in Arabia. He was now with a ministry team consisting of at least Barnabas and Titus. Paul received a revelation from the Lord instructing him to visit the apostles in Jerusalem. He shared with them the gospel he preached among the Gentiles. This was to confirm that the gospel he received from the Lord Jesus was in fact the same gospel the apostles preached in Jerusalem.

He made his presentation to the apostles in private. He said this was so it could be known that his gospel was the same gospel as the original apostles. In the possibility there was a dispute it was wise to do things like this in private. There was no need to embroil the entire church in some kind of controversy.

We know the brothers in Jerusalem gave Paul the right hand of fellowship. Paul was called by the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentiles. The other apostles primarily stayed within the Jewish world in Jerusalem building the faith of believers.

Galatians 2:3-5

Paul described the content of "*another gospel*" which was promoted among the Galatians. This new gospel was a mixture of Christianity and the traditions of Pharisees. These false teachers were trying to mix the old and new. We know from the Lord Jesus that one cannot pour new wine into old wine skins. The gospel could not be contained by Jewish traditions or rules. The church was not a national entity. The promises and boundaries of the church are completely different from what God gave the nation of Israel. We serve the same God. However, there are promises God made to the nation of Israel that he did not make the church. This includes promises pertaining to the physical land of the nation of Israel. Those promises were for natural Israel and not for the church.

The promise given in the garden of Eden that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent is for everyone. In Israel, in the church, and in the kingdom coming soon the gospel is for everyone. This gospel was preached by example in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, there are promises God made to national Israel that are distinct from promises to the church. This does not mean people in Israel were saved in a different manner from those in the church. The spiritual remnant of believers within Israel and the church are saved in the same manner: by faith in the Messiah.

It is difficult to keep these things separate. Some go too far and some do not go far enough in discerning between Israel and the church. Israel, the church, and the kingdom age are periods of time which express God three in one. However, in all of these different days there is still only one people of God who believe the promise of the seed and who have the faith of Abraham. These three are one. God's people are three and one. There are three expressions of God's people, but within those three expressions there are one people who comprise God's remnant.

The problem Paul addressed was the misunderstanding people have between Israel and the church. The church does not follow the laws of Moses given to Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this law for us and he nailed it to the cross. He fulfilled it and then it died with him on the cross. When Jesus rose from the dead he was a new creation and those who have faith in him are part of the new creation. They are part of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. This new creation cannot be contained by an earthly kingdom. It cannot be contained by any nation. However, Israel was and is and will be God's expression of what a spiritual nation on earth looks like.

The church is not a nation. The church is not a nation in the same way the Holy Spirit is not King Jesus. Distinct. Different. But all part of one which is the one God.

It is a mystery how Israel, the church, and the kingdom fit together in the same way that it is a mystery how God is three in one.

But Paul's gospel to the church was not Judaism. It was not a gospel for Hebrews only. It was also a gospel for Gentiles, and those who believed Paul's gospel did not become Jews. They were a new creation in Christ Jesus. The church is Jews and Gentiles combined into a new man which is not Judaism. It is not the law of Moses. Jesus fulfilled the law. He did what no one could do. He fulfilled the law himself and nailed it to the cross. When Christ died so also did the handwriting of the law which was against us. We are dead to the law that we might live for God now in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not serve God in the old way of the written law but in the new way of the Holy Spirit.

Circumcision was a sign God first gave to Abraham for his family and this was extended in the law God gave Moses for Israel. When Paul said they did not allow themselves to be circumcised he was making it clear the gospel is not a new form of Judaism.

Galatians 2:6-10

Paul insisted his ministry to Gentiles and the gospel he preached was not inferior to the gospel entrusted to the original apostles. He said with God there is no respect of persons. Men elevate other men and worship men for the purpose of creating a name independent of God. But God accepts no man's person. Jesus taught if we want to be great, if we want to be somebody, then be a servant of everyone. In the kingdom of God whoever is the least is the greatest. The man who lays down his life and denies his name is the one who is great in God's kingdom.

The apostles acknowledged the gospel Paul preached to the Gentiles was the same message they preached to the Jews. Peter had a ministry primarily to Jewish people. We see Peter in the book of Acts preaching to Gentiles as well. Paul's ministry was primarily to Gentiles though he had a burden for Jewish people.

It is my opinion Paul wrote the letter of Hebrews to the Jewish believers but left out his name because he was not an apostle to Jews but an apostle to Gentiles.

The only request the original apostles gave Paul and his group was to remember the poor. This was also Paul's goal as we see in his letters. In **2 Corinthians** we read about Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

Paul's goal was to defend the gospel which he preached to Gentiles. He was trying to convince the Galatians that his gospel was not inferior to the original apostles. Paul insisted the Lord Jesus taught the gospel to him and the other apostles agreed. They gave him the right hand of fellowship. Paul went to great lengths to prove he was genuine and his gospel was the message from God for salvation.

Paul rebuked other Christians when they mixed Judaism or other religions with the gospel. When anything is taken away from or added to the gospel then it is no longer the gospel. The gospel must be taught completely and defended against wolves in sheep's clothing.

Galatians 2:11-16

This was a good example of why we need brothers in Christ to help us with blind spots. Each person needs others to help correct our lives. If Peter needed Paul to correct him how much more do we need brothers in the church to correct us when we go astray? It is not **if** but **when** we go astray. Isaiah said *we all like sheep have gone astray and each one turns to his own way*. We need people to have input in our lives to help correct us when we go astray.

What was Paul correcting? The issue was the purity of the gospel. Peter's behavior was grievous because he was an example. If Peter gave in to Jewish legalism and mixed the gospel with tradition it set a precedent. The smallest damage this would cause would be to destroy unity in the church. Remember the church is not just Jewish people who became believers, but it was also Gentiles who came to Christ. If the church became a "Jewish" church then it would exclude people. God told Abraham he would make him a blessing to many nations. The gospel is not just for the Jew but is also for the Gentile. The gospel went first to the Jew. Jesus directed his earthly ministry primarily to the nation of Israel and then after his resurrection it spread rapidly to Gentiles.

Underline the phrase "*knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*"

The battle Paul fought was over Christians who became confused about following the law of Moses and the gospel. The gospel means that everyone who believes in the Lord is saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord is saved. Those who wanted to mix in the law of Moses said if you were truly a Christian then you were circumcised and kept the Sabbath.

These cults exist today. There are still people who try to mix legalism and Jewish tradition with the gospel. This battle did not end with Paul and the Galatians but continues to plague the church to this hour.

Be steadfast to reject Jewish traditions and Jewish legalism. Along with that we need to recognize how this applies to anything which men try to add or take away from the gospel. We need to discern what is the gospel Paul preached (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**), and firmly reject anything men add to the gospel.

Galatians 2:17-21

The law could only bring death and condemnation. It could not give anyone righteousness or spiritual life. Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can we receive the gift of righteousness and eternal life. It is by putting our faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus that we are saved and set free from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Galatians 2:20 is a Bible verse we should memorize and store in our heart forever. This verse has helped me a lot to understand what the Lord Jesus did for us. Paul said he was crucified with Christ and he no longer lived. What did this mean? In a simple sense this meant Paul no longer lived for himself. His life was dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. More than that we understand that Christ actually became Paul's life. He no longer lived according to the principles of the world or according to the principles of self-worship. Instead, the Lord became his provider, his protector, and his portion.

Paul concluded that if righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain. This means that earning our salvation is completely contrary to the gospel Paul preached. Paul preached Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen again. We no longer live according to the written code of the law. Now we live for God in the power of the Holy Spirit. God gave the Holy Spirit when we believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we call on the name of the Lord we receive the Holy Spirit.

Self-righteous religion is the enemy of the gospel. Those who want to earn their way to heaven do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Galatians Chapter 3

Galatians 3:1

These were strong words from Paul. He wondered if they were under a spell that they could not think clearly. The gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to them but now they accepted something else which was not the gospel. They were confused by adding to the gospel. They were mixing the law of Moses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Someone taught them that in order to remain saved they had to obey the law of Moses. This was a dangerous error because it put them outside the gospel.

The gospel is the finished and completed work of Christ. Men can add nothing to the gospel and they can take nothing away from it. If they add or take away then it is no longer the gospel and those who believe false gospels are not saved.

The Holy Spirit will only honor the work Jesus did. It is only when we abide on the sacred ground of the finished work of Christ that the Holy Spirit will operate in us. If we move away from the gospel we are on our own. The Lord will only work through someone whose heart is fixed on Jesus Christ.

Notice Paul continued to point back to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is through our faith in the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection that we can truly know God and experience God. We cannot know the Lord if we pursue him through man-made systems, programs, rituals, or philosophies. We must pursue God only through his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God.

Is it possible for Christians to become bewitched? The enemy is relentless in his attack on Christians and even more the closer to the end we get. As the end approaches the work of the enemy will intensify. We must be on guard. We must meditate and set our heart on the gospel of the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:2-5

Were we born again by the Holy Spirit or were we born again by striving to obey the ten commandments? Did we get saved by striving to adhere to the law of Moses or did we find eternal life by faith in the gospel?

These questions have a straight forward answer. Of course we were saved by hearing and believing the gospel. We are not saved through striving to obey God's law. The purpose of God's law was to demonstrate how sinful people are. No one can find righteousness through striving to obey the law of Moses. Anyone who attempts to do this shows they are ignorant of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we started by the Spirit are we sanctified or glorified by the flesh? When Paul mentioned the "flesh" he was pointing to religion which relies on self-effort and self-worship. Anything outside the gospel is "of the flesh". In other words, any substitute religion, philosophy, psychology, or science which subverts, distorts or seeks to replace the gospel is "of the flesh". Anything which is "of the flesh" means that it is man-made. It comes from man; it does not come from God. Man is from below. God is from above. Anything which man comes up with will be of the flesh.

It is amazing that people took God's law and created their own religion from it. They taught men were made righteous by striving to obey God's law. But this is not the way. True righteousness always came by faith in God's Messiah. Those who believe in the "seed of the woman" were counted righteous. Those who are of the faith of Abraham, who believed God's promise, were counted righteous. This righteousness does not come from God's law. This righteousness is a gift from God for every man who believes God's word, God's promise, and God's message of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ.

Paul indicated the Galatians suffered because of faith in the Lord Jesus. Suffering makes us vulnerable to temptation. They suffered because of their faith in Jesus. They suffered by being outside the social, economic, and protective environment of the synagogue.

Now they were taught a message from false teachers who said Christians could have Jesus and also submit to the religious system. They could have Jesus and submit to the religious system.

Paul made it clear we cannot hold the gospel and submit to man-made religion at the same time. We cannot hold the Holy Spirit and unbelief at the same time. We cannot live for Jesus and live for ourselves at the same time.

Living in the Spirit means dying to self which means we cannot be a part of the worldly principles of the religious system.

The Galatians witnessed miracles at the hands of the apostles. They knew the gospel was true and had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. Were they now willing to turn back to dead religion so they could escape the suffering of being outside the social and economic protection of the synagogue?

These are questions we must ask ourselves. We must ask if we are prepared to be outside of fellowship with such cults as the emergent church movement? Are we willing to suffer for separating ourselves from the cult of the prosperity movement? Are we prepared to experience the consequences for rebuking the doctrines of demons pouring through the modern day church?

We must do like Paul. We must take our stand against false teaching and false doctrine. We must discern between the gospel and doctrines of demons. If this was a problem in Paul's day it is much more a problem in the church at the end of the age.

Galatians 3:6-9

The word 'heathen' means Gentile nations. We are brainwashed today that 'heathen' means someone with a bone through their nose living in a jungle. This is not the biblical idea of 'heathen'. The simplest way to understand the word 'heathen' is 'unbeliever', especially nations as a whole who did not know the one true God or the promise of the seed, the Messiah.

The Bible, in the account of Abraham, foretold the gospel traveling from Israel into the whole world. This was exactly what happened. Jesus in his earthly ministry focused primarily on the nation of Israel. However, as he drew close to his death at Calvary we see his intention went beyond Israel. Notice how careful he drew attention to 'heathens' who believed in him. He emphasized the faith of Gentiles, especially in front of his disciples. He drew attention to the faith of Gentiles and how they believed in him.

The gospel is not only a New Testament message. The gospel was preached through the account of Abraham when God said he would bless all nations through Abraham. It would be through Abraham's family that the Messiah would come who would be the Savior of the whole world. Read **1 Timothy 2:3-4**.

People miss the point that within the nation of Israel there was only a remnant who continued steadfastly to believe the promise of the Messiah. They understood the purpose of why blood was shed. The animal sacrifices and the blood pointed to the Lamb of God who provided himself as the sacrifice for our sins. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" (**John 1:29**). And he said again in **John 1:36**, "*And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*"

Men today in the church who have faith in the Messiah are part of the same remnant which is of the faith of Abraham. These believers are overcomers in Christ Jesus because they stand on the sacred ground of the finished and completed work of Christ. Not everyone in Israel was part of the remnant. Not everyone believed. Just like today not everyone who calls himself a Christian is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not everything which calls itself the church is truly the fellowship of those who are born again by the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness was a gift which God bestowed on Abraham because he believed the word of God. God's word to Abraham involved the seed of the woman, the Messiah, and also involved God's word about a nation through whom this Messiah would come. Through Abraham God chose a man, he chose a family, and he chose a nation. Through this nation came the Messiah who will one day rule all the nations and whose kingdom will endure forever.

Galatians 3:10-11

Paul quoted **Habakkuk 2:4**. The just shall live by faith.

This verse tied together Paul's letters in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. He quoted this verse in each of those letters. It provided an underlying theme pointing to the gospel. No matter what the context or who his hearers were Paul pointed them to the gospel. He pointed to salvation by faith in what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul's main defense was against the mixture of Jewish tradition and legalism with the gospel.

Remember in the first chapter of Galatians Paul called down a curse on anyone who preached another gospel? Here he showed us exactly where that curse came from. Anyone who wanted to serve God through attaining righteousness by the works of the law fell under a curse. No one can obey the law of God perfectly. The moment we fail in one point of the law we break all of God's law for God's law is perfectly woven together. A failure in one point is a failure in everything. Therefore we cannot attain righteousness through the law.

No man is justified by the law in the sight of God. Why? Because the just live by faith. God gives the gift of his righteousness to anyone who believes the promise of Messiah Jesus. When we trust in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus at Calvary then we receive the gift of God's righteousness. God is our provider. God is protector. The Lord is our inheritance.

We cannot provide for our own righteousness. We cannot defend ourselves against the accusations of Satan. We do not have to bow down at the altar of unbelief and worship self. Instead, we are set free at Calvary from self, sin, the world, and the devil. The just shall live by faith.

Galatians 3:12-14

We must get this into our heart. The law is not of faith. If we hear someone from a pulpit preaching that Christians are supposed to follow and obey the ten commandments then we are in the wrong church. We are not supposed to follow the ten commandments. We are supposed to obey the Holy Spirit. We are followers of Jesus Christ and not of religion or written code. We serve God in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Anyone who lived according to the written code was obligated to do everything in the written code. This is impossible. No man except Jesus Christ ever fulfilled the written code of God's law. If anyone seeks righteousness through following the written code of God's law he falls under a curse. Everyone outside of Jesus Christ is under the curse of God. Men are cursed with physical and spiritual death. We are separated from God.

The only way to be delivered from all curses is through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ took on himself all the curses when he hung on the cross at Calvary.

As a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ the blessings promised to Abraham came on every man who believed. We now receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. We live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is believing the gospel. Walking in the flesh is when we no longer believe the gospel but rely on ourselves.

The worship of self results in every sin. Self-worship is Satan worship. To love self supremely is to be one in spirit and principle with the devil.

When we believe in the Lord Jesus then we are set free from the curse of the law. We are set free from the consequences of that curse which is separation from God. To be separated from God is spiritual and physical death.

For those who believe in Jesus we will receive a resurrected body which will never die again. We are raised spiritually to life when we believe the gospel. The Holy Spirit comes and lives in us. We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

When a church or ministry focuses on external religion then be careful. It is likely you will find self-worship and a lack of gospel preaching when people focus on external religious rituals.

Jewish tradition and legalism was the problem for the Galatians. For us today there are multiplied different ways the enemy infiltrates the church with false religion, false doctrine, self-worship,

covetousness, or just simply getting preachers to neglect the gospel that Jesus died on the cross for us, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Galatians 3:15-18

Paul compared God's promises to human covenants. When people make contracts, once it is signed and agreed on, then no one is allowed to invalidate the contract or add something else to the contract.

In the same way, when God made his promise to Abraham concerning Christ then no one could take this away or add anything else to it. Paul made it clear that the promise to Abraham pointed directly to the seed of the woman who is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's promise made in the garden of Eden after the fall of man. Jesus Christ is God's promise made to Abraham. The law of Moses, which came hundreds of years after Abraham, did not invalidate or nullify God's promise to Abraham.

People mistakenly get the idea that the church invalidates Israel. I can use Paul's argument here to prove this is wrong. Paul made his point that Moses' law does not invalidate God's promise concerning Messiah. On this same basis I can say that God's church existed from the time God made the promise of the seed of the woman. There were always people who believed God's promise of Messiah, and those who believed were, are, and will always be the true church.

Just as the law of Moses did not invalidate God's promise of Messiah, so also our faith in the Messiah does not invalidate God's everlasting covenant with the nation of Israel. There will always be Israel, the church, and the kingdom. These are expressions of who God is. God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is expressed through Israel, the church, and the kingdom.

God expresses himself in these three days ("Israel", "Church", and "Kingdom"), and at the end of the third day the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven and all is complete.

The problem Paul was addressing was the basic misunderstanding people had between Israel, the church, and the kingdom. These are distinct and yet one. All of Israel, church, and the kingdom are tied together in the promise God gave Abraham.

The law of Moses, the day of Israel, does not invalidate the promise God gave to Abraham regarding the Messiah. The arrival of the Messiah brought in the second day of God which is the church. The arrival of the church did not invalidate Israel but was the fulfillment of God's promise of the Messiah. The church is not national Israel. God did not make promises of land to the church. But Israel still retains those land promises made to Abraham. I can understand how this is confusing to people. The only way to truly see this is by revelation from the Lord.

The problem in the Galatian church was men who tried to combine Jewish tradition and commandments with the gospel. This is not possible. The laws given to national Israel have no place in the gospel and the promise of the Messiah. Ironically, everything in the Hebrew religious system pointed to the Messiah and the day of the church. And, also, the church is not just Gentiles who believe in Jesus. The church is both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus the Messiah. The church is Jew and it is Gentile. It is both combined in a new creation in Christ Jesus.

I must say with Paul in **Romans 11:33**, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

Meditating on the day of Israel and the day of the church makes me wonder what the day of the kingdom will be like. I'm convinced we do not yet have a reference point for understanding what is in front of us in God's kingdom. Just as Israel pointed toward the Messiah and the church so also Israel and the church together point toward something even greater in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:19-22

There is a lot packed in these verses. Right here Paul gave the reason and purpose God provided the law under Moses. The purpose of the law was to prove to men they were sinners in need of a Savior. God's law demonstrated that the standards of holiness were above and beyond the reach of man.

God's law was not against God's promise. God's law could not provide spiritual life or righteousness to men. It could only point out how desperate men are for God's righteousness.

The scriptures prove all men are under sin. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The only hope we have now is to believe in God's promise in Jesus Christ. We receive God's promise by faith. We believe God's word. Our only work is to believe in the Son of God Jesus Christ. Jesus is the promised seed. This promise was given by God in **Genesis 3:15**.

If there had been a law which could have given men spiritual life then righteousness would have been by the law. However, Paul pointed out that righteousness does not come by the law. Men are not made righteous by striving to obey God's law. Instead, we are made righteous as a gift from God because of what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Where does the scripture conclude that all men are under sin? This conclusion can be made by reading the ten commandments God gave Moses. Every man born has broken the first commandment and all of the rest of them as a result. We all have made our own selves a god in the place of the one true God. We all have declared our own selves independent of God by our thoughts, attitudes, agreements, and our actions.

Without the Lord Jesus Christ every man on earth is doomed. Our only hope is to put our faith and our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord.

Galatians 3:23-29

Before the appearance of the Messiah God's people had the scriptures which promised the Messiah. They also had God's law. God's law taught people of God's holiness and his perfection. God's law teaches that the Lord is above and we are below. The Lord is from heaven. We are made from the dirt of the earth. God's word shows us we can never cancel our sins through self effort. We could never do enough good works to cancel the sins we have committed. Righteousness before God cannot be attained through striving to obey God's law. When God gave the law and told men to keep it he showed us that the requirements were beyond us. Try your best and follow the ten commandments and you will learn one thing: you are a sinner. The more you strive to obey God's law, the harder you work, the more

heinous your sin will appear before you. God's law is a mirror which shows us how filthy and caked in iniquity we are.

How does this help? It helps us because we learn we are sick and need a doctor to heal us. We learn we have a problem that no man on earth can fix. There is no philosophy, religion, or psychology which can fix how broken and messed up we are. There is no program that can solve this problem. Our only hope is outside of our self and outside the reach of mankind.

God's law teaches us we need the Lord Jesus to be our Savior. We need him to be our Lord. Once we put our faith in the Lord Jesus we are immediately liberated from the law and the curse of the law. Our conscience is cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shed on Calvary. There is no more penalty we must pay for our sins because all our sins were paid for on the cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus bore our sins.

Isaiah 53:6, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

We become children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus. The law did its work by pointing us to the Savior. Now that we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus the work of God's law is finished in us. We are no longer under God's law. We do not need to do anything to prove to God or anyone else that our sins are gone. God himself has wiped away our sins by the sacrifice of his Son Jesus.

Now that we are in Christ we are a new creation. Those who are in Christ no longer find their identity in their gender, or sex, or in their social station. In Christ Jesus we find who we truly are. We are born again. We are a new creation. We are Christians! We are Abraham's seed and we inherit the promise of God.

Galatians Chapter 4

Galatians 4:1-5

Paul expanded on his previous statement that the law was a schoolmaster that brought us to Christ. Now he turned the illustration around to focus on those under the schoolmaster. The illustration was of a household where children were raised alongside servants. The child could not do anything more than a servant in the house. He was under a schoolmaster. However, the day would come when he was no longer a child but inherited his full rights as a son.

This was what happened in history. God gave the law to teach men they needed a Savior. At the right time in history the Lord Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. He was born in Israel and under the law of Israel. When he grew up he gave his life at Calvary to redeem Israel and every man who would believe in him. He became the Savior of the world.

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the end of life under the law of Moses. This does not mean God will not fulfill his promise to Israel as a nation. Paul made this clear in Romans that the Lord is still not finished with Israel as a nation. The names of the twelve tribes are inscribed on the New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven from God.

The problem Paul addressed in Galatians was that men still attempted to be Jews and added Jesus to the law of Moses. We cannot do that. Jesus fulfilled the law of Moses. He redeemed us from the law so we would no longer be powerless children living with servants. Now we have received the adoption of sons and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Those who want to live under the law of Moses are carnal and of the flesh. They focus on external, outward religion and rituals. They do this to bring people under control. They do not care about people but they do care about numbers that they bring under their name.

We have been set free by the gospel to serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. We should not go back to legalism and religion but instead live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 4:6-7

Paul told Christians who they were. They were no longer servants in the house of the law. They were no longer servants of Moses and Jewish tradition. This was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not cancel or do away with the law. Instead, he fulfilled God's law. He fulfilled everything God gave to Moses in the law, the religious ceremony, the covenants, everything! Jesus fulfilled the entire purpose for why God made the nation of Israel. Jesus is the King of the Jews. He is the King of all the nations. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron when he returns.

We are not servants of Moses and the law. We are not under religion or rules or laws. Instead, we are sons and heirs. We are one with the Lord Jesus Christ. This made us heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus. I don't think we comprehend the magnitude of what this means.

When Paul contrasted a son and a servant it was for the purpose of illustration. I've heard people take this out of context and say Christians are not servants. However, Jesus himself said that he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Christians are servants to other people. We serve one another, we serve in the church, and we serve unbelievers as well. We serve them by being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. However, in the context of Paul's illustration, we are not servants of the law of Moses. We are not servants of Moses. We do not serve the ten commandments. Instead, we serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Jesus now lives in our hearts, and we cry out to God in prayer: "Daddy, Father!" The word Abba is Daddy. This is a word which is emotional. It goes beyond saying "Father", and brings in the aspect of emotional attachment. We are attached to the Lord, not just because of intellectual reasons, but because there is a real attachment to the Lord. He is Abba Father. He is our daddy.

It is much different to have a relationship with God based on love rather than obligation. It is not easier to relate to God on the basis of love but it is different. Paul said the love of Christ constrained him. We are hemmed in behind and before by God's love. We can never escape God's love. Why would we?

When I am filled with the Holy Spirit I automatically cry out to God with "Abba Father". I know he loves me. I can feel it. I am comforted by God's love, I am exhorted by God's love, I am built up by God's love. God's love does not allow me to get away with sin or compromise. It searches my life from head to foot. It searches my heart and mind for unbelief or compromise. I will never get away from the love of God. I don't want to get away from God's love.

He knows everything about me. This is the kind of relationship a son has with his father. He knows me. He knows every detail. I don't understand why he loves me. I don't know why he does, because I am unworthy. However, I know my older brother Jesus died for me and his blood washed away all of my sins.

Galatians 4:8-11

Before the Gentile Christians heard the gospel they served something Paul said "by nature are no gods". Idols? Statues? They probably bowed to man-made idols or statues. They probably burned incense or put fruit in front of a statue or lit candles at the foot of an idol. Now after they heard the gospel and became Christians they were slipping back into pagan religious activity. What did Paul mean "ye observe days, and months, and times, and years". This probably referred to a system like a horoscope. Or it could be referring to the Jewish system of observing days like the Sabbath, and Passover, and various holidays. However, Paul made it clear that a Christian was not obligated to follow Jewish rules, laws, holidays, or customs. As a matter of fact it is dangerous to follow these things. It breeds self-righteousness and religious pride.

Paul wondered aloud if he had wasted his time with them. They believed the gospel but were easily distracted and deceived by paganism and Jewish legalism. The same is true today. People are distracted by external religion or New Age spirituality. These same doctrines of devils have been around for a long time. Man keeps falling into the same traps of the enemy.

Paul's correction of the Galatians is needed today. We need to examine whether or not we follow religious rituals or do we have a real and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is not enough to go through the motions of playing church and having a 15 minute devotion in the morning. Pray to God he would deliver us from the delusion of false spirituality.

Galatians 4:12-16

Paul persuaded people. He influenced people by appealing to their conscience on the basis of truth. Notice how many times in Paul's letters we see the word "beseech". Paul did not lord his authority as an apostle over people but instead appealed to the conscience. He did this because he trusted the Holy Spirit in people. He trusted the Holy Spirit to help people make the right decision when confronted with truth. Instead of forcing people to submit he pleaded with people to submit to the truth for the sake of the Lord.

What did he mean when he asked them to "be as I am"? How was Paul? Paul believed and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. He determined to know nothing but Christ crucified. He asked them to have the same attitude he did about serving God. Do not serve God in the flesh by following religious rituals. Instead, serve God in the Spirit by believing the gospel.

We can see into Paul's personal life and ministry here. We get a glimpse of what might have been his "thorn in the flesh" which he mentioned in **2 Corinthians**. It seemed he might have had a problem with his eye sight. *"Ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me."* This seems to indicate Paul was blind or partially blind. Did this vision problem stem from when the Lord Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus?

The last part of the verse strikes home with me. "*Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth*"? I've seen this happen in my life with people. Family and close friends turned their back on me when I spoke the truth. I'm not talking about when I gave my opinion, but when I gave the Bible on an issue. People don't want to hear the truth. They would rather live in a fantasy world of lies. It is sad but I have seen it.

I pray to God I will love the truth even if the truth condemns me and breaks me. I want to fall on the rock of Jesus Christ and allow him to break me. Because if I do not submit myself to the truth then one day the truth will fall on me like a stone and grind me to powder. This is what Jesus said. He is the truth. He is that stone. It is better to fall on him than have him fall on you.

Jesus is returning to this earth. His return will be like a stone falling out of a mountain which breaks everything to pieces. He will wreck the nations and establish his kingdom of righteousness forever.

Galatians 4:17-20

There were false teachers who led the Galatians into legalism. They were taught to have a relationship with God based on the Torah rather than the free gift of God's grace in his son Jesus Christ. Paul said these false teachers influenced the Galatians but not for good. They wanted to exclude the Galatians from the church and bring them into their cult.

Paul was in distress, like a mother giving birth to a child, until he knew they were secure in the faith of the gospel. He wanted to know they were no longer deceived by the false gospel but were secure in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul loved them and wanted them to be established on the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of being led astray by false teachers of "Torah" he desired for them to remain in the freedom God gave to us in his son Jesus Christ.

We have good reason to doubt people are saved when they live according to spiritual or moral law. When people put faith in "seed faith" we should have doubts that they know the Lord Jesus. People who live according to a cause and effect relationship in life turn their back on God's grace. God's grace does not work like spiritual law or moral law. If we live according to moral or spiritual law we bring ourselves into bondage to idolatry, covetousness, and the result of that is unbelief and sin.

Instead, we should follow Paul's example of living by grace. Grace does not focus on the cause and effect relationship in life but instead focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:21-27

Paul used an illustration from the account of Sarah and Hagar to show us the difference between religion and relationship with God. With religion we get bondage and no spiritual life. With a relationship with God by faith we get spiritual life and freedom. Paul associated the gospel with the "Jerusalem which is above". The gospel, and Jesus, and the New Jerusalem are tied together. These are also tied together with the phrase "the faith of Abraham". Remember scripture told us that Abraham was like a stranger and a pilgrim in this world system. He was living for something else which he saw by faith. Read **Hebrews 11:8-10**.

Some Galatians were ready to turn their back on the gospel and return to Jewish legalism. They wanted to put themselves under the law of Moses. Paul asked them since they wanted to go back under the law did they understand what they were doing? Then he used this account from "the law" to prove his point about the law bringing men under condemnation. Those who are under the law bring themselves under condemnation and spiritual death. The law cannot give spiritual life. The law was put in place because of sin and was to be an instructor pointing us to the Savior Jesus Christ.

These two sons of Abraham illustrate a pattern in the Bible. We often see examples of two men who contrast the flesh and the spirit. We see in the accounts of the patriarchs and their families. There is a brother of the flesh. There is a brother of the spirit. These stand in stark contrast to one another.

This points to the principle of an overcoming remnant within the house of faith. This overcoming remnant are those who walk by faith in God's promise. They abide in the finished work of Jesus Christ. They are not moved away from the gospel. For them the gospel is more than forgiveness of sins. It also means victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. The overcoming remnant is the brother of the spirit. The lazy, unbelieving man in the house of faith is the brother of the flesh. His mind is on his own self-provision, self-protection, and he is more of a self-worshiper than a worshiper of the one true God.

This same pattern can be seen in the parable of the ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. They were all virgins. This pattern can be seen in the phrase "one was taken, one was left."

We are exhorted to be awake, watching, and praying. We are told to pray that we can be found worthy to "*escape all these things which shall come to pass*". Why should we be watching, waiting, and praying unless it will make a difference in whether or not we are raptured or left behind? Let us pray we can be filled with the Spirit and be ready to be caught up together with the Lord.

Galatians 4:28-31

One point I think is missed here is that both of the sons were of the same family. The brother of the flesh and the brother of the spirit were in the same family. They were in the same house. It is the same in the house of Israel, in the house of the church, and in the house of the kingdom. There are brothers of the flesh and brothers of the spirit. Those who are of the flesh persecute those who are of the spirit.

The first example in the Bible is Cain and Abel. One brother of the flesh and one brother of the spirit. The brother of the flesh persecuted and murdered the brother who walked in the spirit. Nothing has changed. This pattern continues through the Bible and is true today.

The son of the bondwoman, the brother of the flesh, is the one who is cast out by God. He does not inherit the promises of God. He does not inherit the kingdom of God.

People assume because they call themselves Christian or their parents were Christians or because they darken the door of a church that they are good. They think they will inherit the kingdom of God. They won't! They will be left behind. They will be in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This doesn't necessarily mean cast into hell. I think people can still be saved as through the fire but not have inheritance in the kingdom. I think this loss of reward and loss of crowns will be enough to cause anguish. Thank God one day the Lord will wipe away all our tears. Every tear will be wiped away, even the tears of loss and regret.

I'm not implying everyone is saved and will go to heaven. The only way a man can be saved is to believe in the Lord Jesus, to call on the name of Jesus, and to believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day. How many people have I known in my life that would profess this and yet their lives were a wreck? I've known many people who called on the name of Jesus but there was no evidence of faith in their lives. I'm not judging them. I do believe everyone who calls on the Lord should consider that we have the judgment of Christ in front of us. This judgment is about rewards and inheritance. This should be taken very seriously.

Those who believe in the gospel and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are sons of freedom. We are free in Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be entangled by false religion, idolatry, psychology, humanistic ideas, or a worldly attitude. Instead, be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the mind of Jesus Christ. Develop a biblical attitude.

Galatians Chapter 5

Galatians 5:1

The "*yoke of bondage*" was when people mixed the Jewish traditions with the gospel. The gospel is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. When men add anything more to this then they dilute the power of God for salvation. To be entangled in a yoke of bondage meant to add or subtract from the gospel.

The successful cults will include some version of the gospel. They will talk about Jesus Christ. They will extol the virtues of Jesus Christ. They will even praise Jesus Christ. But then the penny drops. They teach that you must be baptized or you do not have eternal life. They teach you must keep the Sabbath or you are not a "spiritual" Christian. They introduce the idea of greater and lesser Christians in the church and teach if we do this or that then you are part of the elite Christians.

It is true that within the outward church there is a remnant. But these people are not more spiritual. They are not super Christians. They are not elite. Actually, they are usually the broken ones, the weak ones, and the base ones. All they have is the knowledge that Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. This is what they have. It is all they need. They hold to the gospel, because if God required anything more than faith then they would be lost forever and they know it. Overcomers are not super Christians. They are broken people who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But cults create a separation between themselves and Christians. They create an attitude of superiority because they don't go to movies, or they don't drink, or they don't eat certain foods. They will create external rules to follow to make themselves superior to other people. They will force their women to wear head coverings. They will force churches to observe certain days or holidays. This is adding to the gospel. All this religious activity brings people into bondage to the flesh and unbelief. It makes people into self-worshippers. It deceives people into thinking that the church is about self-improvement or about living the good life now. This is lies and adding to the gospel.

The gospel is not about being happy or improving your life. The gospel is about dying with Christ, being buried with him, and then being raised by God to walk in the new life of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:2-4

I had a friend once who said he "*fell from grace*". During our conversation I learned what he meant by this phrase was that he sinned. He fell into temptation. However, since he was talking to me I knew he repented or had asked forgiveness. So in reality this brother did not "fall from grace". He sinned. There is a remedy for falling into sin. **1 John 1:9**. Confess our sins and God will forgive us. Why? Because of the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

When Paul said "ye are fallen from grace" he meant something different than falling into sin. He was talking about someone who changed their God. They were no longer putting their faith in the one true God, but now put their faith in God plus their self-effort to save themselves. This does not work. We cannot do enough good works to save ourselves. We cannot do enough good to cancel out the evil in our lives. Even if that were possible we are still sinners by nature. We were born sinners. The only hope we have of entering God's kingdom is to be "born again" by the Holy Spirit.

Falling from grace means we think we can serve God on our own terms. We draw up a contract with God. We strike a deal. We make up rules or we think we can follow rules other men came up with. Following the traditions of men does not commend us to God one bit.

Circumcision was an outward expression of an inward faith that Israel had in God. Circumcision was given to Abraham by God. This was renewed under the law of Moses for Israel. This was an outward sign of their profession of faith.

However, a man could be circumcised and still not believe in God. This is true of people in the church. They can get baptized in water and still not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. People have ulterior motives for going along with religious observance.

Paul said if they wanted to get right with God by circumcision then they were obligated to follow through with obeying all of God's law. Obedience to all of God's law, however, is impossible. We see this over and over in the history of Israel. They constantly went through this process of sinning, confessing, repenting, backsliding, sinning. The law could not save them. It could only condemn them.

The only ones who truly knew God were those who had faith in God's promise of the Messiah. Those who put their faith in the promise God made of the seed. The seed of the woman is the promise that God would destroy the work of the devil through a man.

The work of the devil is to get man to agree with the devil to live in rebellion against God's word. God's work is to destroy this rebellion but he does so through persuading men to voluntarily lay down their arms. We surrender to God when we believe the gospel and put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This is the only true surrender. All other forms of surrender are phony and self-made.

The only true way to God is through his son Jesus Christ. We do not find God through striving to obey outward religious rules or laws. We do not know God through the written code of laws. We can only know God by faith in his son Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:5-10

One doctrine of these false teachers was that to be a true Christian they had to follow the law of circumcision. Paul contradicted this by saying that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything in relation to salvation. We are not saved by performing outward religious observances. Paul said what really mattered was faith working by love. Faith towards God, expressed through love towards God and our neighbor. Love is the fulfillment of all the laws. Love God. Love people. This is not possible, however, outside the context of faith in the one true God.

Paul compared the doctrine of the false teachers to leaven in bread. It does not take much leaven to change the nature of bread. Jesus compared the teaching of the Pharisees to leaven. Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. We need to be careful what kind of teaching we allow ourselves to be exposed to. Any teaching has the potential to change our lives. Any teaching which is not the gospel of Jesus Christ will change us into the image of the serpent. Anything which is outside the gospel will make us one with the serpent.

The gospel of Jesus Christ makes us one with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us one with the Lord Jesus. Paul warned the Galatians that anyone who brought a false gospel would bear the judgment of God.

Galatians 5:11-15

The fear of the legalist is that grace will lead people to sin. The opposite is true. It is religious legalism which keeps people in bondage to self-worship, unbelief, and sin.

We are called to freedom in Christ but Paul said we do not use our freedom in Christ to indulge the flesh. Instead we are called to serve. Freedom in Christ is so we can be equipped to serve others in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian freedom is serving others. The fulfillment of God's law is to love God and to love our neighbor. The fulfillment of God's law is not religious observances such as circumcision or baptism, but instead the fulfillment of God's law is to love the Lord and to love our neighbor.

Our modern culture will even corrupt a concept such as "*love thy neighbor as thyself*". This modern psychological culture interprets that to mean until you love yourself you cannot love others. Again, the opposite is the truth. We are born loving ourselves. We love ourselves supremely. It is taken for granted in this verse that we love ourselves supremely. Instead, we are called to love others with the same attention we lavish on ourselves.

Corrupt humanistic psychology twists scripture to conform to the satanic goal of self-worship, self-love, and self-image. This is the opposite of the biblical framework of thinking.

The Christian loves the Lord with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He loves his neighbor.

Practicing external religion destroys people. It creates division and strife and people end up devouring one another.

Galatians 5:16-18

A man walking in the Spirit sticks with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel is outlined in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. All this is according to scriptures prophesied in the Old Testament.

The gospel is simple but the application is profound and deep. You can read how Paul applied the gospel to the Christian life in **Romans chapters 6-8**. He outlined how the Christian is not only forgiven but we are made one with the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. As a result of this unity with the Lord Jesus we experience power to live a holy life. A holy life is not a sinless, perfect life while we still live in these fallen, human bodies. However, we do experience consistent victory over sin, self, the world, and the enemy.

The "flesh" is a word which pointed to a life of independence from the Holy Spirit. To live according to the flesh means we do not believe the gospel and as a result we produce what is against God's kingdom. Our words, actions, thoughts, and attitudes are against the kingdom of God.

Walking in the Spirit begins, grows, and flourishes in the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will only honor the finished work of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not honor human strength, human will power, or any vows we make. God will not deal with us according to deals we make on our terms. He only relates with us on the terms he made. Those terms are simple. We can only know him and experience eternal life when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was a young Christian I thought walking in the Spirit meant self-discipline. I wanted to be serious all the time and remove myself from all foolishness.

However, if we examine the life of Jesus Christ we see he did not avoid evil people. He met them straight on with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot walk in the Spirit by running away from people or hiding from the world. We walk in the Spirit by believing the gospel and trusting in the Lord to make us holy. My prayer is the Lord will make this temple holy. My prayer is he will continue the good work he started in me so long ago.

When a man walks in the Spirit he is no longer obligated to follow religious rules. You see this clearly in the life of Jesus. He did not feel it necessary to pay attention to religious traditions of the religious leaders in his culture. As a matter of fact, he called them blind leaders of the blind. He warned his disciples to beware of the hypocrisy of religious leaders who burden people with man-made religion, rituals, and traditions.

Let us keep to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our doctrine is Christ Jesus himself. Our doctrine is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:19-21

Here is a list of what it looks like to walk according to the flesh. Walking according to the flesh is as simple as not believing the gospel. When we choose to guide our life according to our own opinion we are automatically living according to the flesh. The result of basing our life on our own independent

understanding is outlined for us. When we live for self we will act like this. We will commit adultery and sexual immorality. We will be unclean.

Since we do not believe in the Lord Jesus we will believe in our own self which is idolatry. This leads to manipulating ourselves and other people which is the basis for witchcraft. When people do not bow down to our wishes or opinions we will hate them and strive with them. We will try to dominate other people and bring them under control. This will inevitably lead to wrath which is anger on steroids. This leads to more division from other people and more strife. We will develop patterns of thinking which incorporate religion, psychology, and mass media but blasphemes God because it is a lying, cursed false world view. All of this continues to escalate into murder, drunkenness and a life-long pursuit of escapism through constant stimulation and new experiences. Where does all this lead? It leads to our own spiritual and physical death.

Those who live like this will never inherit anything in God's Kingdom but are shut out from the presence of the Lord. They don't know the Lord in this life and they will only move further away from the Lord in eternity.

God is light and love. What does separation from him mean? It means unending darkness and hatred. What is the practical definition of darkness? It means no clocks, no calendars, no way to tell where you are, no direction, no purpose, only regret and pain and anguish. Is that what you want?

All you need to do to inherit eternal darkness and anguish is reject the gospel. You can pretend to accept the gospel and add to it all your own opinions and cancel out the true gospel as well. Just turn away from the gospel and do your own thing. It is simple to live like this: everyone does.

The Lord gives us a choice. It is also simple to believe the gospel. Even a child can comprehend and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. It is not God's will for anyone to perish but that everyone come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:22-26

We are given a list of the results of living for the flesh. Now we can look at this list of the fruit of living in the Spirit. A man who walks in the Spirit has this list of qualities in ever increasing measure in his life. Note, this spiritual fruit is not for the man himself but for those who come into contact with the spiritual man. These qualities help others to understand the gospel and come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing we see in the life of a spiritual man is love. This is not the kind of love we hear the world talking about. To the world and those who reject the gospel this kind of love appears to be hatred. This is how opposite the spiritual man is from the world system and unbelievers. His life seems like hate. It seems like darkness. The world calls what is evil good and they call what is good evil.

This love is different from the world's love. This love exists within the boundaries of holiness, righteousness, and purity. This love is not necessarily an emotion, either. Instead, it is a commitment to the highest good of others and the universe. This is a self-denying, self-sacrificing love. It is mostly unknown in our modern world.

The joy here is also not the joy the world knows. Spiritual joy is consistent despite good or bad circumstances. This joy does not depend on provision or protection. It is a joy which can exist in a prison, or in a concentration camp, as many Christians in the past have demonstrated. This is the joy which comes through obedience and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is what the scriptures call "joy unspeakable". It cannot be described by human words because it is not a joy which comes from man but it is the joy of the Lord. It gives us strength to endure tests, trials, and temptations.

From the fountain of joy comes a stream of peace and patience. We experience peace with God and from this a growing patience with men around us. Since God loved us then the least we can do is be patient with people who harass us. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit. James admonishes us to let patience have her perfect work in us so that we may be complete and entire lacking nothing.

Out of this stream of peace and patience flows a river of gentleness and meekness. As we walk in the Spirit our faith grows more and more.

We cannot create these qualities in our life. We cannot memorize the definitions of these words and hope to make goals to apply these qualities to our life. This fruit comes from the Holy Spirit living within us. Day after day, as we abide in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will continue to bear the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is to benefit those whom God wants to reach through us with the good news: Jesus Saves!

Galatians Chapter 6

Galatians 6:1

The letter to the Galatians was Paul's attempt to restore the Galatians to the gospel. He concluded the letter with instructions to restore those who were overtaken. In the context of this letter this would mean those overtaken by a false gospel. Paul said the man who restored others should himself be a spiritual man.

What makes a man spiritual? It does not mean the man is perfect or without flaws. It does, however, point to a man who has a firm grip on the gospel. He should be convinced that his only hope and the only hope anyone has is the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that spiritual men who restore others should do so with humility. Our attitude when restoring others should be meekness. We should approach things with a humble mind. I have failed many times to deal with people with meekness. Instead, I've been impatient and wanted people to shape up or ship out. Wrong attitude.

Our attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ. Jesus humbled himself. He washed the feet of his disciples. He patiently taught them and instructed them.

Meekness provides the best hope of restoring someone. It is much harder to restore someone if we are impatient or angry. There is a place for correction but within that a person should feel the love of God and our broken heart. We should not attempt to restore someone with an attitude of superiority. This does not help to restore others.

Restoring people is hard work. I know it is because when I was a young man I was in full time ministry helping others with severe life controlling problems. It is hard work to deal with people every day. After awhile I learned the only ones who would change were those who received revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A program cannot save anyone, but it can provide people with an opportunity to hear the gospel.

We should consider ourselves when helping others. We might start trying to help someone and wind up in the same problem. It is easy to be tempted and thrown off track when serving people. It is easy for the enemy to get us to sin when we are trying to help people. We cannot help others if we are living in sin ourselves. We need to consider ourselves. Are we in sin? Are we compromising? Are we messing up? Only someone who is serious about overcoming problems in their own life can help someone else. I think this is the real meaning behind what Jesus said when he was talking about having a log in our eye and trying to help someone with a speck in their eye.

Galatians 6:2-5

After exhorting spiritual Christians to restore their fallen brethren we are instructed to bear the burdens of others. What is the law of Christ? This is to love one another. Jesus told his disciples that the world will know that we are Christians by our love for one another. We are to encourage one another, help one another, and lift each other up. If Christians do not help one another then who will?

Pride keeps a man focused on himself and his own needs. He will not take his brother into consideration because he is preoccupied with his own needs, desires, and plans. He is too busy thinking of his own protection and survival to worry about another brother who is suffering. He has enough problems of his own. This is what it looks like when someone thinks himself to be something. When pride is in control it is not the upward glance of the nose but it is rather the constant inward gaze on one's own needs, desires, and pleasures that possess a man.

A humble man is not focused on himself but is focused on serving others. His heart is set on serving the Lord by helping those who are in the church.

We should do our best to bear our own burdens and not ask too much from others. Remember **Proverbs 25:17**, "*Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.*" It is wise not to be a burden on others.

Galatians 6:6

This is a straight forward instruction for people who listen to Bible teaching to support Bible teaching. If we are blessed spiritually by a church then we should support that church financially. Those who are taught in God's word should share their material resources to make sure that the teaching of God's word may continue. This might be a good argument for tithing, but I don't believe Christians are obligated to pay tithes. I do believe we are obligated to help support the work of God, not only with our attendance but also with our material resources.

There are a lot of Christians who have independent or para-church ministries with their hands out as well. What do we do with that? We must pray and find God's will for what ministries to support. We may only be called to support the local church. We should support our church and Christian fellowship.

This does not diminish the need for foreign missions and for support of charitable works around the world.

I've supported ministries in the past which impacted my life. I've always believed as far as I can remember that Christians should love Israel and support evangelism to Jewish people. There are some good ministries out there involved in this work.

There are still places which provide ministry for young men and women who are suffering from drug and alcohol addiction to get their life together in a Christian environment. I can't say I agree with where these ministries have gone as a whole the last few years but I still support the mission of reaching young people with the gospel. Those who struggle with life controlling problems are open to hearing and receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the people the Lord Jesus reached in his earthly ministry. These are the people the apostle Paul said God calls. (See **1 Corinthians 1:26-28**). I would definitely visit a ministry center first before supporting it financially. Talk with students or residents of the ministry to find out the real deal about the ministry.

Any ministry which is reaching people who are in need is a ministry I could get behind as long as they also preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many people claim to preach the gospel but you need to listen to what they are saying to know for sure. Compare what they preach to **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

Let's remember to support those who preach the word. We should be willing to communicate, to share, and to give towards worthy ministries and churches.

Galatians 6:7-8

There are several warnings against deception, and, of course, the entire letter is a warning not to be deceived by false gospels.

The deception is in thinking God conforms to men. I've heard unrepentant sinners proclaim "God is love" but in their mouth this meant something different than what the Bible teaches. They meant God conforms himself to them and overlooks their sin because he is love. They do not understand the biblical definition of love. God's love does not prevent him from punishing men for their sins. It also means God's holiness does not prevent him from being the one who justifies the wicked. We should never presume we can live in sin and get away with it. We should never assume God will wink at our sins or that we will not suffer consequences for doing our own thing.

If we live according to the flesh then we will suffer for it. We will reap the harvest of sowing to the flesh. Sowing to the flesh, in view of this letter, is turning our back on God's gospel in Jesus Christ and instead thinking we can live for God on our own man-made terms. Men do this all the time. They think as long as they follow "*the rules*" then God does not see the wickedness, the pride, or the depravity in their heart and thoughts. To think God cannot see us or hear the thought in our heart is, in essence, to mock an all-knowing God. The Lord is omniscient and omnipresent. He never leaves us alone, no matter how we may feel or what we may think. He sees and he hears. When we refuse to bow down and acknowledge our sins the Lord allows the natural progression of those sins to take their course.

We reap what we sow. We harvest what we plant. If we live for self then our reward will be isolation. If we live for the Lord and sow to the Spirit then we will reap the reward of eternal relationship with God.

Sowing to the Spirit results in eternal life. Eternal life is simply a relationship with God who gives life, and meaning, and purpose. God is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion.

Those who sow to the flesh get their own self as their portion. Those who sow to the Spirit have the Lord as their portion.

My desire is to sow to the Spirit. My goal is to invest in God's kingdom and what counts for eternity. I do not want to deceive myself into sowing what is temporary and passing away. Instead, I want to invest in what will last forever.

Galatians 6:9

There is danger in becoming tired while doing what is right. Paul would not give this exhortation if there was not a danger of weariness. When a man gets tired he is more tempted to give up. How do we keep ourselves from becoming weary in well doing? Paul gives us one reason right in the next breath: we have hope. We have hope because God is faithful to reward us. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. At the right time we will receive the return on our investment. However, in order to receive our reward we can't give up. We have to continue. We have to abide. How many times does the Bible talk about "*if we continue*" or "*if we abide*" or "*if we don't give up*". One might be tempted to think salvation is dependent on doing good works. However, salvation and eternal life are not in view. What is in view is reward and inheritance.

We want to receive a harvest for the seeds we planted. Make sure we plant the right seeds, and then don't give up planting those seeds. Don't get tired of planting the good seed. Don't become tired of doing what is right. Let us not become weary in well doing. Why? Because in due season we shall reap a harvest. There is a reward for those who continue to invest in eternity.

I started praying when I was a young Christian that I could invest my time and energy into what would count for eternity. Even with prayers like this I'm afraid of how much time I've wasted and how many opportunities I've let pass me by. The enemy is a determined foe. He wants us to stop believing in God's word and God's promise to us. He wants us to get weary in doing what is right so that we will be cheated out of our reward.

If the enemy cannot steal our salvation then he will work toward denying us any reward when we stand before God.

Revelation 3:11, "*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"

Why did Jesus exhort us to hold fast so that no man could take our crown? The only explanation is that there is a possibility we can be cheated out of our inheritance in God's kingdom. If we profess Christ but live like the world and waste our lives we will lose our reward. If we become tired of well doing and give up then we will lose the reward which the Lord had for us. The word "crown" represents a reward for our lives. I don't think we meditate on this enough, and let it sink into our heart and mind. We don't want to think about the possibility of running our Christian race in vain. We don't want to think all of our sacrifices in the past were void because we gave up before the finish line.

Do not be weary! Do not give up! Keep sowing the seeds of the gospel. Keep believing the gospel, preaching the gospel, and living the gospel. Read **Isaiah 40:29-31**. Along with that read **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**.

Galatians 6:10

Christians should take every opportunity to do good for other people and especially brothers and sisters in Christ.

Doing good requires the Christian to think of others besides himself. This requires humility. Remember, pride as defined in this chapter, is thinking of your own needs and not giving any thought to the needs of others. Humility, however, is displayed by someone who thinks of other people. Humility thinks of the needs of other people, even when one is himself standing in need. Humility puts the needs of others first. This is the example which the Lord Jesus gave us. He put others before himself. Even when he and his disciples were tired and needed rest he did not quit because he was moved with compassion.

There are many opportunities to do good even if this means all we can do is pray and intercede for other people. Consistent intercession for others will help us develop the attitude of Christ. By praying for others we may become the instrument in God's hands to meet the needs of others.

A distinction is made between those in the household of faith. Paul did not say we should ignore those outside the church. We should be ready to help society and do good. However, we should be especially sensitive to the need of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We can do good for our brothers and sisters by not becoming a burden on them. We should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and trust in the Lord to provide for our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Also, if we do have material resources, and are aware of a brother or sister or a Christian family that is need... then, ignore them. Don't call them. Don't reach out to them. Right?

From what I've seen of so-called brothers in Christ that is what we do. But that is not what we do according to scriptures. That is how I know that Christians, at least some who I've encountered, are for the most part ignorant of the Bible. What do they think being a Christian is? Do we think if we spend the night in a garage it makes us a car? If we sit at a table in McDonald's does it turn us into a cheeseburger? Read **1 John 3:17**.

Lord, please help me to always be sensitive to the needs of people. Lord, please help me, if I have material resources, to be ready to help my brother and sister in Christ who need help. Lord, help me to always have an open hand and an open heart. Thank you, Father. In Jesus name.

Galatians 6:11-18

Another reason people gravitate toward religion instead of a relationship with God is because of persecution. The world does not hate religious people. But they do hate someone who has a real relationship with Jesus Christ. They hate born again Christians.

Christians always suffer persecution because of the cross of Christ. Why is this? Because it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which seals the fate of all those who hate God. They can never say God is unjust in sending them to a burning lake of fire. All they had to do was believe the gospel. All they had to do was to reject everything in the world except the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is so easy that a child can do it. But when men reject the Lord Jesus and turn away from the gospel they have no excuses left. This is why men hate the cross of Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ sealed the fate of Satan and all those who take his side against God.

Those who have been crucified with Christ on the cross are no longer a part of the world system. Now, when they interact with the world system, it is for the purpose of providing the light of the gospel and the salt of God's word. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They do not engage the world system because they are self-worshippers who live for self. They now engage the world because they are ambassadors of Christ and are on a mission to lay down their life so others will be saved as well.

If a man is in Christ Jesus it no longer matters if he is a Jew or a Gentile. It does not matter if he is a man or a woman. It does not matter what race, culture, or language he comes from. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. He is now a Christian. Christ Jesus defines his life.

Paul was persecuted for the gospel he preached. He bore in his body the evidence of the persecution he endured and suffered. He was a witness of the gospel and did not apologize to anyone. He did not back down but confronted false gospels and false teachers. Why did he do this? Because Paul loved the Lord Jesus and the church. God counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry, to show the world that if a man like Saul of Tarsus could be saved and become an apostle Paul that God can save anyone.

The Lord is ready to save anyone who will turn to him in faith and believe the gospel. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Believe this in your heart, and confess with your mouth "Jesus Christ is Lord". Call on the name of the Lord! Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

Ephesians Chapter 1

Ephesians 1:1-2

In Ephesians Paul proclaimed the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I see a lot of similarities between Ephesians and Romans. It was more a letter of doctrine than correction.

Ephesians was one of the prison letters. Paul wrote Ephesians when he was a prisoner of Rome. It is hard for me to imagine how a man could write a letter like this while he was chained up but that was what happened. Paul was a prisoner of Rome, but he considered himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ministry can happen anywhere a believer is. As a Christian I can serve the Lord anywhere. No matter what my outward circumstances may be I can still serve the Lord.

Paul was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. This calling was according to God's will for Paul's life. We can read the book of Acts for more of Paul's background. If God can save a man like Paul he can save anybody.

Paul addressed local churches by their geographical location rather than by the name of a man or a doctrine. Today men name churches according to doctrine or the names of men. However, we don't see this in the Bible. Instead, the only division in the church was where a church was located. The point is that churches should not be divided by the names of men or doctrines. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ should not be divided.

Paul extended a greeting of grace and peace. This is both a Gentile and Jewish greeting. Of course, that is exactly what the church is: Jews and Gentiles brought together in the new creation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.

God is three in one. Here we have the Father and the Son mentioned in one breath. Jesus Christ is God. God the Father is God. Three persons in one God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:3

During the time the religious leaders examined the Lord Jesus he asked them a question. Read **Mark 12:35-37**.

This question pointed us to the fact that Jesus was not only a man but he was also God the Son. We must understand that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus is God the Son. Paul pointed this out when he said, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*". Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Joseph was the adopted father of the Lord Jesus. However, the real father of Jesus is God. Mary was a virgin when she conceived and gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was according to the promise of the angel which appeared to Mary.

It is important to keep in mind that God is three in one. If we deny this then we deny that God the Father is God or we deny that Jesus Christ is God. Others have tried to twist this into saying that God was the Father and became the Son but that is not what Paul said. He said, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are separate and distinct persons. Now, we must think about this. If they are separate persons and both are God then God must be more than one person. He is three persons. God is Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

God blessed us with spiritual blessings. People do not want spiritual blessings, though, do they? They want material blessings. They want resources they can manipulate or use as leverage against other people. Spiritual blessings are not like that. Spiritual blessings cannot be manipulated or used against other people. They cannot be used as leverage to gain something from someone else. Spiritual blessings are eternal; they are not temporary. Spiritual blessings are available now.

Some spiritual blessings we can enjoy are peace with God, forgiveness of sins, spiritual power to live a pure life, spiritual power to deny self, walk in victory over sin, live in distinction from the world system, and authority to drive out the devil. These are spiritual blessings we received through the

crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure there are more we do not yet know about. The Lord has a storehouse of blessings for those who trust in him.

All spiritual blessings are wrapped up in Christ Jesus. We have nothing outside of Christ. Everything is in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we have the Lord Jesus then we have everything we need. When we have the Lord Jesus we have eternal life. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins. In Christ we have grace to deny self. In Christ we have victory over the power of sin. In Christ we overcome the world. In Christ we defeat the power of the devil.

All the Father gives to us is in his son the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (**John 14:6**) The apostle John wrote: "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*" (**1 John 5:12**)

Ephesians 1:4

How are we chosen? How is the Christian chosen by God? We are chosen "in him". This is so important to keep in mind as we read this. The Lord Jesus lived before the foundation of the world. The Lord Jesus lived throughout eternity as God. God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. Three in one. God chose us in Christ. God the Father chose each Christian in Christ. In Christ Jesus. It is vital we see this. People jump right to the Calvinistic idea of predestination when they read this but Paul did not write a Calvinistic principle. Paul was before Calvin. Paul wrote about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not writing about Calvinism. We need to look at this as it was originally written and not through the lens of a man-made system of theology.

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. When were we saved? I was not born until this last century, but in Christ I was saved before the foundation of the world. How God intended to save me was established before God made the world.

The idea is not my election but that my election is in Christ Jesus. The work of Christ Jesus was established before the world was made. My redemption was completed by Christ in the heart of God before anything was created.

This is true for any man who believes the gospel. Any man who will put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can benefit from what God established before the foundation of the world. It is not God's will for any man to perish. It is not God's will for any man to perish but that all men come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan of salvation was written and settled and established before the world was made.

The emphasis is on Christ Jesus and not on me. The focus is not on men but the focus is on Christ Jesus. It is in him we are chosen. In Christ. We are not chosen if we do not believe the gospel. It is only in Christ Jesus anyone is chosen. If it is not God's will for anyone to perish then every man has the ability to believe the gospel. Anyone can believe the gospel if they choose to do so. Man's sinful depravity does not impair man's will to choose when presented with the gospel. Anyone can believe the gospel if they choose to do so. Man is responsible for believing or not believing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are chosen in Christ. The Lord makes us holy and without blame before him in love. The Lord has taken us for the purpose of making us holy and without blame before him in love. I yearn to be holy

and without blame. I yearn and ache to be freed completely from this body of death which is so easily stumbled by sin and temptation.

Does your heart yearn to be holy and without blame? In Christ Jesus we have this and we will have this even more in our resurrected bodies.

Ephesians 1:5-6

The Christian was adopted and accepted according to the good pleasure of God's will. It was God's will to adopt us and make us accepted in the beloved. How is this possible?

We now move beyond forgiveness of sins and into relationship with God our Father. Not only has God justified us and forgiven us but God also adopted us. He took ownership of the lives of those who trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

This adoption and making us acceptable was part of a plan God had before time. God predestined that there would be a bride for his son the Lord Jesus Christ. He planned this before anyone was born or even before the universe was created. The Lord had a blueprint for all of this and knew exactly how it would turn out.

In this verse we see we are adopted by Jesus Christ to himself. The Lord used various word pictures to describe his relationship with us. We are adopted children. We are beloved. We are a bride. All of these are intimate relationships with the Lord Jesus. The Lord loves us more than we can comprehend.

How has the Lord made us accepted in the beloved? He did this by dying for us on the cross. He was buried and he rose again on the third day. Through his death, burial, and resurrection he made us accepted. We are grafted in through the work which Christ did. We become part of God's family through adoption.

God's will be done. There are people whom the Lord adopted and made acceptable. His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He removes every spot and blemish from our lives. He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7

Redemption through blood was from the very beginning. Not long after Adam and Eve sinned and broke their relationship with God the Lord shed the blood of an innocent animal to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. From that point forward God taught us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. The sin problem can only be resolved through the shedding of blood. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this requirement. I have discovered that when God requires something he fulfills it. The Lord provided himself as a sacrifice for our sins. (**Genesis 22:7-8**).

We were redeemed from the penalty of our sins. The wages of sin is death. We die because we sin. However, the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by shedding his own blood for us on the cross. When Jesus shed his blood and died on the cross the perfect substitution was made that fulfilled all the requirements of God's justice. Now God can be just and also justify the sinner who looks to Jesus. When we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ God redeems us from our sins through his own blood. He gave his life for us.

Through the blood of the Lamb we receive forgiveness of sins. Remember what John the Baptist said about the Lord Jesus. **John 1:29**, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

Jesus not only died for the people in Israel but he also died for the sin of any man in the world who would believe in him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord is saved. God's sacrifice is for everyone who will believe the good news. Read **Isaiah 53:6**.

Ephesians 1:8-10

God adopted us and made us acceptable. He also abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He did this by making his will known to us through his son Jesus Christ. God revealed himself to us through his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

People take the word of God for granted. There are so many Bibles people do not understand what a great gift the Lord gave to us through his son Jesus Christ and the record we have of him in the Bible.

The mystery of his will which was hidden but is now made known is that God is reconciling everything to himself through his son the Lord Jesus Christ. He is gathering together those who believe in his Son. He gathers us together in Christ Jesus. Everything in heaven and in earth is gathered together in Christ Jesus.

The Lord provided himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Everything else we need for life is also provided in the Lord Jesus. He is all we need. He is our provision, he is our protection, and he is our portion. He provides for us, he protect us, and he is the purpose of our life.

God has a specific time for accomplishing his goal and purpose. At the right time the Lord Jesus came into the world and gave his life on Calvary. In the dispensation of the fullness of times he gathered together all things in Christ.

God is never late. Mary and Martha thought the Lord Jesus was too late to save their brother Lazarus. God is never too late. He is resurrection. He is life. Everything in heaven and on earth is under the control of the Lord. We can rest in him.

We can have complete peace in the Lord. He has everything under complete control. We can rest in his plan and purpose. Nothing is impossible with the Lord. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we could ever ask or think. He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. (**Romans 8:28**).

Ephesians 1:11-12

Christians received an inheritance. Instead of asking what is our inheritance we should ask "who" is our inheritance. Read the verse again: "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance*". It is in Christ we have received inheritance. He is our inheritance. This is important to understand. Our inheritance is the Lord. Our reward is the Lord. Read **Genesis 15:1**.

The Lord said to Abram that he was Abram's reward. Reward means inheritance. Those who have heard from the Lord know this. They know their reward and inheritance is not in this temporary world

system. Our goal is not to achieve anything in this world system. Those who are deluded by the spirit of the enemy embrace the system of the world which is based on pride. Men make a name for themselves. They try to bring other people underneath the name they create. The more numbers they bring under their name the more provision and protection they have. Their reward is their own selves. Their reward is not the Lord. Their reward is "self". They worship self.

Those who do not believe in God automatically become idolaters. They are self-worshippers. When men turn away from God they automatically turn to self-worship. They are made one with the lie of the serpent and become one with the serpent in principle. This principle is self-love and self-worship. This is the essence of what sin is. Sin is living for self instead of living for God.

Those who live for self lose everything in the long run. Jesus spoke to this. He said those who seek to save themselves will lose themselves but those who die for the gospel and for the Lord will save themselves. The choice is simple. Live for self or live for God.

We cannot escape self-worship by our effort or work. We cannot escape the snare of self-worship by understanding it. The only way to escape from self, sin, the world, and the devil is by putting our entire faith in the finished work of Christ. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. God the Father places the believer into Christ and unites him with the Lord in death, burial, and resurrection. This truth of unity with Christ breaks the power of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Jesus taught his disciples that they could not follow him unless they would deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. Taking up the cross means to deny self and live according to the same Spirit Jesus lived. Jesus lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we live according to the Spirit by believing the gospel and trusting in Jesus then we are set free from self-worship. We worship God in spirit and truth.

When we worship God we receive God as inheritance and reward. Those who worship self receive self as reward and inheritance. We can receive more of God or we can have more of ourselves.

But what men do not understand is that more of self is a dark, black pit. More of self is a black darkness which has no bottom or end. It is hell. Self-worship leads to hell.

Ephesians 1:13-14

When we believe the gospel and put our faith in the Lord Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit. We are born again by the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is dead until we believe the gospel and then our spirit is made alive and the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Paul described this as being "*sealed*" by the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit is described as an "earnest" of our inheritance.

To understand "*sealed*" we need to think of an old-fashioned envelope that we can put a letter in and mail to someone. In ancient times when someone put a letter in an envelope it was sealed with some hot wax and the sender put his stamp on the wax to authenticate who the letter was from.

When we are sealed by the Holy Spirit the Lord puts his stamp on us and this is a guarantee of what is coming in the future. The Holy Spirit is the first experience of what we will inherit in the future. If our inheritance is the Lord then being filled with the Holy Spirit is the first taste of this.

We will receive more of God in the future. There is a day when the "*purchased possession*" is redeemed. We have to take our time and think about this. Who or what is the purchased possession?

Christians are a purchased possession. We have been purchased by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross at Calvary. God redeemed us from our sins.

Now what does the "redemption" of this purchased possession mean? This is pointing to a time when our mortal body is swallowed up by the life of a resurrected body. We see a fleeting glimpse in these verses but if we read the entire Bible we get a better picture. (**1 Corinthians 15:54; 2 Corinthians 5:4**)

We are the purchased possession. God's purchased people will be resurrected. The fact we are filled with the Holy Spirit is a guarantee we will be resurrected. Our inheritance is more of what we have just a taste of now. We have a taste of God by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:15-16

From here to the end of the first chapter we have an outline of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians. When Paul heard of their faith in the Lord and love for all the saints he prayed for them. How does this apply to us? When we hear of believers in other places we should pray for them.

Paul tied faith and love closely together. Faith in the Lord Jesus and love for the saints. The word "saints" simply means people who believe in the Lord Jesus. If you believe in Jesus you are a saint. No special acts of piety are required to be called a "saint". All we do is believe in the Lord Jesus and we are saints.

Paul responded to the news of these Christians by giving thanks for them. Giving thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ is a basic principle of interceding for the church. We give thanks to God for churches which worship the Lord Jesus and preach the gospel. We give thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ. We will spend eternity with these brothers and sisters in Christ.

He did not cease to give thanks. He continued giving thanks every time he prayed. Thanksgiving is a vital part of prayers. In everything give thanks. Pray without ceasing.

Prayer is life long. It is not something we did one time at an altar. It is a continuous lifestyle of relating to God. We humble ourselves and pray for the church. We intercede for brothers and sisters in Christ. Prayer knits us together with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul made mention of them in his prayers. He didn't spend all his time in prayer just praying for them. He made mention of them. It is good to remember people in prayer and mention them by congregation and by name. It is good enough to call out the names of people before God. Ask the Lord to bless this church, and these people, and this brother or this sister today.

This is what Christians do. We stay in God's word and we intercede in prayer. Read **Acts 6:4**.

Ephesians 1:17

We need help from the Holy Spirit to comprehend who God is. We need the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes and ears so we can see and hear the Lord. It is not possible to understand who God is unless the Holy Spirit reveals him to us.

The Holy Spirit is doing this right now for people all over the world. He convinces the world of sin, judgment, and righteousness. Read **John 16:8-11**. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and give us understanding of the Lord Jesus. Read **John 16:12-14**. Without this Spirit of wisdom and revelation from the Lord we cannot understand the Bible. I remember clearly before I was saved I read the Bible and did not understand it. I understood it in a general sense but most of it did not make sense to me. When I read Romans chapter 6 I had no spiritual understanding of what Paul was writing about the Christian life.

However, after I was filled with the Holy Spirit I saw the meaning of scriptures and how everything pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Testament and New Testament points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to see his son Jesus clearly. It is impossible for the natural, unbelieving man to see what the Lord Jesus has done. For the unbeliever the gospel is foolishness. They cannot comprehend it. However, for those who believe the gospel it is the power of God for salvation. The gospel is God's power of salvation whether or not anyone believes it, but when we do believe the gospel we come to understand why it is like this. Why did Jesus have to die on the cross for our sins? Why was Jesus buried and then rise again on the third day?

Let us pray the Lord would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord. Read **1 Corinthians 2:12-14**.

Ephesians 1:18

The eyes described here are not physical eyes. These are spiritual eyes. Paul prayed that the spiritual eyes of their understanding would be enlightened.

In God's light we see light. (**Psalms 36:9**). David prayed for light in **Psalms 43:3**. God gives light through his word. Read **Psalms 119:105**. We need light from the Lord in order that we can understand and know what is the hope of his calling. What is the hope of God's calling? It is natural to think that God's calling points to our vocation on earth, and that is part of it, but the hope of God's calling goes beyond what vocation we have.

Read **Hebrews 6:18-19**. What is within the veil? This described that holy of holy places in the tent of meeting where Moses met God. In the holy of holies was the place where the high priest entered to offer the blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. Our hope is within the veil because that is where the Lord Jesus Christ entered in once and for all with the blood of his own sacrifice. He offered himself as the Lamb of God.

The hope of our calling is in Christ Jesus himself. He is our hope. Our blessed hope is his return to this earth and our being reunited together with him. Read **Titus 2:13**.

What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? We have already said that the Lord is our inheritance. He is our reward. And what is the Lord's inheritance? He inherits us! The saints are the inheritance of the Lord. He purchased us with his own blood on the cross at Calvary. He gave himself for us. The Lord receives us as his inheritance.

In **Hebrews 12:2** it says Jesus endured the cross because of the joy that was set before him. What was that joy? What was the joy that was set before the Lord? I have no doubt that joy was in bringing us with him to heaven. His joy is in securing us for all eternity in a right relationship with himself.

We can be confident that this good work which the Lord started in us will be carried on to completion until the day when he returns.

Ephesians 1:19-20

Why would Paul pray that believers know about God's power? Paul described God's power with the words "exceeding greatness of his power". Paul prayed the Ephesians would not only know God's power but "what is the exceeding greatness of God's power". This power is for those who believe the gospel.

What is the greatest demonstration of God's power in the Bible?

God's power was demonstrated when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. There is no greater demonstration of the power of God in the Bible.

This was not a resuscitation. All the people Jesus raised from the dead before his own resurrection could be considered "resuscitation" in the sense they still died again. Lazarus and Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow from Nain all died again. They are all waiting for the kind of resurrection Jesus had when he was raised from the dead.

When Jesus was raised from the dead he received a new, resurrected body which can never die again. Death no longer has any power over the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers could know the "exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" he was pointing toward resurrection power. This is the power of the new creation. When we believe the gospel our spirit is made alive. We are born again. We receive the Holy Spirit as the first taste of what is to come. Paul prayed that we can be completely assured of the exceeding greatness of God's power to raise us from the dead.

Why should we be convinced? Why should we have this unshakable confidence in God's power? For the same reason Abraham became convinced that since God told him to sacrifice his son Isaac that God would raise him from the dead.

We need to be convinced of God's resurrection power because this faith sets us free from the fear of death. A fear of death is not something to take lightly. The fear of death brings men into bondage to self and self worship.

Read **Hebrews 2:14-15**. Man is in shackles because of the fear of death. A man may not even consciously think about death but it is always there. It influences everything men do and even more so as time goes on. Men become more and more in bondage to self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship because they can feel it: time is running out! They become desperate to experience and do things and leave behind something. This brings them into bondage more and more to sin and unbelief.

However, as Christians, we need to be completely set free from our fear of death. We do this by contemplating the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We should pray God would open the eyes of our spirit so we can know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe. With this spiritual knowledge we are set free from the bondage of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Ephesians 1:21-23

There are many names in this world. Men worship the names of men: religious leaders, business leaders, political leaders, military leaders. Men love to worship the names of men who were powerful or prestigious or who had position in whatever part of the world system.

One day there will come a man in his own name who will deceive the entire world system in every way, whether it be political, business, or religious. This deceiver will magnify his own name.

Why did Jesus ask the demons their name? They said, "Legion, for we are many". This demonstrated the principle of the world system. Their power is their multiplied numbers which they bring under one name "Legion". Men create a name for themselves and multiply their position, power, provision, and protection through numbers of men brought into slavery under a name. This is how the entire world system works. It operates through magnifying the names of men and multiplying men as numbers underneath a name.

However, our scripture says God the Father gave Jesus a name which is "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come...*"

This is why the world system hates God. God will not allow the world system to create a name for its own self that is greater than the name of Jesus Christ. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This will destroy the pride, prestige, provision, and protection which the world system created for itself. All those who agreed with the world system and made their soul one with the world will be crushed when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. The kingdom of God is like a stone which comes rolling down out of the mountains which crushes the idol of the world system.

God placed all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus crushed the head of the serpent at the cross at Calvary. He spoiled all principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. The Lord Jesus destroyed the work of the devil. For this reason God has given the Lord Jesus authority to rule over all the nations. He will rule world with an iron scepter. His kingdom will not compromise with men who make a name for themselves.

Those who confess Jesus is Lord have his name written on them. They become one with the Lord Jesus in his victory over the world system and over the devil. God makes the enemy ashes under the soles of their feet.

Jesus is the head of the church and king of the nations. He fills everything in every way. He is Lord of all. There is no religious leader, prophet, guru, philosopher, or psychologist who can compare with the Lord Jesus Christ. They are underneath his feet. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns.

Ephesians Chapter 2

Ephesians 2:1

This old English word "*quicken*" means to be made alive. We could paraphrase this as "*God made you alive who were previously dead in trespasses and sins*". How did God make us alive?

To understand the difference between spiritual and physical death it might help us to look at the three parts which make up man. Man is spirit, soul, and body. Man is three in one. His body is the outside which interfaces with the world around him. His soul comprises his mind, will, and emotions. The spirit in man is where the Holy Spirit lives in a believer. The spirit is the seat of the conscience and where a man communes with God or with other spirits.

When a man is born in this world through his mother his body and soul are alive but his spirit is dead. His spirit is cut off from God. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that for a man to enter the kingdom of God he must be "born again". A man is born once of his earthly mother. He must be "born again" in his spirit by the Holy Spirit in order to be alive spiritually.

Why are men born with a dead spirit? Because we are descendants of Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve fell they were separated from God. God said to Adam that in the day he ate the forbidden fruit he would die. He did die on that day. He died in his spirit. He was cut off from God in his spirit. When his spirit died his soul (mind, will, and emotions) asserted control and he became "self" conscious. He was no longer led by his spirit anymore but became led by his mind, will, and emotions. This change separated man from God.

When we believe the gospel the Holy Spirit makes our spirit alive again and we are restored to fellowship with God. We become "God" conscious. The more a man grows in his spirit and allows God to strengthen his spirit the more God conscious he becomes and less "self" conscious he becomes. Spiritual growth is "denying" self. It is dying to the self life. It is becoming more and more alive spiritually. We allow our spirit to control us instead of our mind, will, and emotions. Our spirit is under the control of the Holy Spirit.

A side note here: men who are not "born again" are still able to manipulate their spirit to communicate with demons and devils. This is why we have people in the occult and witchcraft. Their spirit is cut off from God but it can still commune with devils. This is one of the reasons why these practices bring the death sentence under God's law. When men use their spirit for anything other than communion with God they bring God's wrath upon themselves. Discerning this will help us to understand scriptures such as **2 Corinthians 7:1**. Sin is not only possible in "the flesh" but sin is also committed "in the spirit". Men are capable of sinning against God with their spirit as well as their flesh.

When a man believes the gospel of Jesus Christ he is born again. When he receives God's word then his spirit is made alive. He is enabled to commune with God and worship God in spirit and in truth. It is

God's desire for men to worship him in spirit and in truth. **1 Thessalonians 5:23** demonstrates the three in one nature of men.

God made us alive in Christ Jesus. We are born again by the Holy Spirit when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus are saved because calling on the name of Jesus Christ proves their spirit is alive. Only people who are alive spiritually call on the name of Jesus Christ. When a man's spirit is dead he will turn to the world system, to philosophy, and to dead religions of the world system. Men who worship self are dead spiritually. God made us alive and we worship the Lord Jesus in spirit and in truth.

Ephesians 2:2

This verse is profound in application. We can learn a lot about ourselves, the world, and what is behind the scenes of the world system. This verse divides humanity into two separate groups. It shows us mankind is spiritual and is a servant of God or a servant of the devil. There is no in-between.

When we are born we are sinners. We are born self-worshippers. This can be seen even in the earliest signs of understanding in children. "Mine!" says the child who has only learned two words including this one. The other word is "No!"

Man is born focused on self. He lives for self: self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. It is this triangle of self which keeps men in a constant state of blindness to truth and reality. The reality is that the universe does not revolve around us. It revolves, instead, around its creator and maker, God himself.

The "course of the world" is self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. The apostle John wrote it this way: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Here we have the three in one evil spirit of the world. This evil spirit energizes government, business, and society. It is the gasoline for this man-made, Satan-inspired machine which feeds the flesh of men and starves his spirit.

The pattern of the world is putting self first. The first commandment in God's kingdom is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second commandment is to love our neighbor as we (already) love ourselves. These commandments contradict how the world system operates. The "course of the world" is in opposition to loving God and loving our neighbor.

In the same breath as "course of the world" we understand there is a spirit behind the course of the world. What is this evil spirit? Paul called this spirit "the prince of the power of the air". No where else in the Bible do we see this title for Satan. Only here in this verse.

It is important that the Holy Spirit revealed this aspect of the enemy to us. This enemy is a prince of the power of the air. He moves around in the atmosphere? UFOs? Radio waves? Television signals? Media broadcasting? What is the application of "prince of the power of the air". I think all of the above. Where did men get the knowledge of building airplanes? The pride of men provided the answer

for us. We are so smart and clever, right? I don't think so. We are seeing the explosion of knowledge and travel the prophet Daniel foretold would exist in the last days.

This technology and ability to travel in the air comes from "*the prince of the power of the air*".

How did the prince of the power of the air do this? This verse tells us plainly this evil spirit is working through the "*children of disobedience*".

Every person who does not believe in Jesus is controlled by this prince of the power of the air. This spirit works through every unbeliever.

How? Fallen men are **one** with it. We became **one** with the serpent in the garden of Eden when we chose to believe the devil's lie instead of God's word.

What you believe makes you who you are. If you do not believe the Bible and God and the gospel and Jesus then you are a self-worshiper. You are **one** with the serpent. You are a devil follower. You are becoming a devil yourself. You are preparing yourself for the lake of fire.

Repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn your back on the course of the world. Deny self. Repent! Put your faith and trust and hope and love in the Lord Jesus Christ and no one else.

Ephesians 2:3

The word "*conversation*" is different from the modern meaning of the word. In this context "*conversation*" meant lifestyle. In the previous verse the children of disobedience were mentioned. Paul said the devil and the world system work through the children of disobedience. He said we all had our lifestyle in the past according to the pattern of the world.

He expounded more on the pattern of the world by describing it as "*the lusts of our flesh*" and "*desires of the flesh and of the mind*". From this we understand that the natural, unbelieving man is controlled by his body and mind. He seeks to fill the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

We all came from the natural man. When we are born we have this nature of the children of wrath. Everyone is born with the nature of someone who brings down God's wrath on them. This is because we are descendants of a father and mother who changed from their original creation into something fallen, broken, twisted, corrupt. They changed from people who were with God to people who became one with the serpent.

What does it mean to be "one" with someone. It means you take on their thoughts, their beliefs, their attitudes. Our physical genetics and DNA was changed into something else. Man was originally something far different from what he became after he took the devil's word against God.

Man is spirit, soul, and body. All this was changed by the fall of man. Man's spirit died. His soul asserted itself as the new commander. In many people the soul no longer leads but the base fleshly instinct and the body leads them. We see this in people who completely give themselves over to drug addiction, alcoholism, or demon possession.

Christians were all once part of this group under the wrath of God. They are different now because they believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their spirit was made alive. I think this transformation is literal, instant, and changes more than just the spirit in man. I think it has a profound effect on the soul and the body as well. We know eventually God will redeem our physical bodies at resurrection.

Children of wrath follow the desires of the mind and the body. Their will is bent on self-provision and self-protection. They assert their own righteousness by self-defense. If you have ever met someone who constantly defends themselves you have met someone who lives according to the desires of the flesh and the mind.

We need to remember this is what we came from. We need to remember that the only difference between a Christian and a person under God's wrath is the work Christ did for us. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for us, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This is the only thing that separates the Christian from those under God's wrath.

Ephesians 2:4

It is the Lord who saved us. We don't save ourselves. Once we wandered around in darkness and did not know where to go or how to get there. Then out of the darkness came the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We grabbed hold on it. We took hold on the outstretched hand of the Lord Jesus.

But God! If not for God's grace and mercy we would never make it out of sin, self-worship, the world system, and Satan. That dark world of unbelief had us completely surrounded on every side.

Why does God love us so much? God is rich in mercy. God is love. He extends mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Why do men reject this? Why do men turn away from the outstretched hand of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why do they run away from the light of the gospel?

But God! I could not save myself. I could not create my own light to dispel the darkness. I could not flap my arms or sprout wings and fly away from the darkness. No matter what I did or where I went I was suffocated by the darkness of unbelief.

But the Lord stepped in. He sent people who carried the light in their heart and shared the good news. I remember their faces. I don't remember all their names but I remember their faces. I remember where I was at when I heard the good news and knew it was the truth. I could look at the lives of these men and I knew they had what I needed.

God had mercy on me. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever would believe in him would receive eternal life.

Eternal life is to be reconnected to God the Father through the Son Jesus Christ. Eternal life is to know God once again after being separated from him. To be with the Lord is to have life. To be separated from the Lord is death. Read **Romans 6:23**.

Ephesians 2:5

This verse circles back to verse 1. Let's read verse 1 again and think about this: "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*"

Death is separation from God. Sin separated us from God. Death and sin are tied together. One goes with the other. If death and sin go together, then life and righteousness also go together.

How can someone who is dead in sin be made alive? Remember the word "quicken" here means "made alive". Even when we were dead in our sins God made us alive together with Christ. That "together with Christ" is the key here. There is no life outside of Jesus Christ. It is only through being joined together and united with the Lord Jesus Christ are we made alive. We receive life through the Lord Jesus Christ. He literally raises us from the dead.

When Christ was raised from the dead we were also raised together with him. Just like in Adam we died in our sins, so with the Lord Jesus Christ we are made alive because of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. God took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. This is the work of God from beginning to end. Read **1 Corinthians 1:30**. These are precious words to hold onto. God placed us into Christ Jesus. We cannot put ourselves there. We must trust that God put us in Christ Jesus. It does not depend on our ability, our righteousness, what we have or have not done.

This is what it means "*by grace ye are saved*". It is God's work from beginning to end. We had no part in salvation. God did it all for us. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

God made us alive in Christ. When Jesus rose from the grave we came with him. You might be scratching your head right now and wondering how is this all possible.

Jesus told a Pharisee once: "*You must be born again!*"

The Pharisee tried to understand this logically using human wisdom. He could not understand how a grown man could be born "again". But the Lord Jesus was speaking spiritually.

What God did for us is eternal and it is real. Just like we cannot see the wind but we know the wind is real because we feel it on our face, in our hair, and we can see it move the trees. Wind is real. The invisible world of God is real also. The facts in the Bible about salvation and redemption and eternal life are real. These facts in the Bible are more real than what we can see, hear, feel, and taste right now. Everything we see at the moment in this world is passing away. But God's kingdom and God's reality will last forever.

God made man to live forever. His soul cannot be erased from the universe. Our soul will go on existing in one state or another. We will either end up in a lake of fire or we will end up in heaven with God. The only way to be saved from hell and go to heaven is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Romans 10:9-10, 13**.

Ephesians 2:6

God the Father placed us into his Son. When Jesus died on the cross we died with him. When Jesus was buried in the tomb we were buried with him. When Jesus rose from the dead on the third day we rose with him.

After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples and then he ascended to heaven. We ascended in Christ Jesus back to God the Father and we are seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Some people call this "positional truth" because our position in Christ is sitting in the heavenly places. However, I like to call this "true truth" because it is more real than our current situation in this world system. The world is passing away but God's kingdom will last forever.

This verse says when Jesus ascended to heaven we ascended with him. He made us sit with him in heaven. In Christ Jesus we are seated with God in heaven. This is the position of the Christian. We can have complete assurance and confidence in our eternal salvation because the Bible says God "*made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*".

To sit down means to take authority. When Jesus taught his disciples he would sit down. When he taught people he would sit down. Sitting down means to take authority. This verse points to the authority we have in Christ Jesus.

This does not mean we are little gods like the perverse prosperity false preachers want to convince people. We are in Christ Jesus. We are not Christ or another Christ. That is a part of the last days deception and delusion.

It is good for us to know we are secure in our relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. God gives us spiritual authority to proclaim his word, to pray and intercede for people, and to drive out the enemy with the truth.

Ephesians 2:7

There are ages after this current age. There are "ages to come"! What does this mean? It means there is a great future ahead for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an amazing, fantastic adventure ahead for us who believe. This life is not even scratching the surface of all the Lord has prepared for those who love him.

In those ages to come God will point to those who were redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. These redeemed souls are proof of God's grace and kindness which he gave through his son Christ Jesus. God's love and kindness is demonstrated in and through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way anyone can truly benefit from God's grace and kindness throughout all eternity. God's grace and kindness toward us is through the Son of God Jesus Christ.

God's grace is described as "*exceeding riches*". Words fail to really grasp and illustrate what this means. God's grace is exceedingly rich. There is no end to it. It is an ocean. It is a mountain. It is like all the stars in the sky at night. It is endless and overflowing and abounding towards us.

All of God's grace is bound up in his son Jesus Christ. Those who reject the Lord Jesus are rejecting God's grace and his kindness. All that God has done for us was done through his Son Jesus Christ.

Turn away from religion, philosophy, and psychology. Turn your heart toward knowing the Son of God Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is only by knowing God through Jesus Christ that anyone can truly know life and experience life as God created us.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Memorize these verses. These are some of the most important Bible verses a Christian can know. Get it deep in your heart, meditate on it, and make it part of your every day thinking and living. It is by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves. We are saved by God's gift. Salvation is not of works so that no man can boast.

Why is this so important? Because those who believe doing good works earns them a right to salvation are of their father the devil. They are following the way of Cain and man-made, self-centered religion. Doing works to please God is self-made religion.

Our salvation is a gift from God. This gift is his son the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and who rose again on the third day. Salvation comes by simple faith in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved. All we have to do is believe in him and call on his name and we are saved.

All the thief on the cross had to do for salvation was pray to Jesus. He asked Jesus to remember him. That is all he said. He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

If a man knows these verses and truly understands these verses then this knowledge will save him from most of the false religion out there. There are other and more subtle deceptions people use while still talking about grace that can lead people astray as well. However most of the false religion can be avoided by just knowing and believing these simple Bible verses.

No one will ever boast before God that they earned their salvation by doing good works. All of our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. We can do nothing to earn our salvation and prove that we are righteous. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one is righteous, no, not one man. Our only hope is faith in the Lord Jesus and receiving his free gift of salvation.

Ephesians 2:10

We are God's workmanship. We are his work of art. We are his poem. We are his painting, his photograph, his novel, his inspiring speech, his vessel of honor. We are his. We belong to God because he made us. Read **Psalm 100:3**. Man did not make himself. Chance and evolution did not create man. God created mankind. We are his workmanship. We are proof that God exists. We are proof of the great Designer, the greater Worker, the Creator.

We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Christians do good works, not to obtain salvation, but because they are saved by grace through faith. When a man is truly saved his life will produce the good works which God ordained for him to walk in. His life will produce the fruit which God put into him before he was born.

It is only in Christ Jesus that we can truly fulfill the good works we were created for by God. It is only in God's will that we can find the true purpose for which we were created.

Those good works are not something to strive for, but something that flows out of the heart of those who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Good works are the result of a heart that is right with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

God ordained ahead of time that we should walk in these good works. As long as we keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ we will walk in these good works.

Jesus taught about this by using the illustration of a vine, branches, and fruit. Read **John 15:4-5**.

Ephesians 2:11-18

The message is simple. God's plan from the beginning was that not only those in the nation of Israel would have an opportunity to believe the good news of Jesus Christ but also the entire world. All the Gentile nations were included in God's plan of salvation. Israel is special because it is through these people that God gave us the Messiah and the Bible.

The gospel is for everyone who will believe. No one is excluded from hearing the gospel. Everyone is invited to hear the gospel and believe the good news that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

The outward sign of difference between a Jew and a Gentile was the ordinance of circumcision. The Lord told Abraham to circumcise the men of his household. This was a sign of the covenant promise which God gave to Abraham. Those promises and that covenant had to do with the nation of Israel and the land which they would inherit.

Christians do not have any kind of ordinance they are commanded to follow to prove we are a Christian. Some may argue that baptism is the outward sign of the Christian but it is not. There is nothing wrong with getting water baptized as a testimony of your faith in God, but we should remember that baptism is used as a symbol or illustration in the New Testament of salvation. Study the word baptism and you will find that it is used as an illustration. Noah was baptized in water as well. He was saved through water. Water baptism symbolized that we died with Christ, we were buried with him, and we were raised together with him. It is not the water that gives spiritual life. Faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ is what gives spiritual life.

Paul said that what Christ accomplished at the cross removed the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile. We now live in the day of the church. In each day, however, there still exists Israel and the nations. Israel and the nations are currently in the background but they are still part of God's plan. In the first day when Israel was front and center the church and the nations existed in the background. The church was the believing remnant within Israel who believed God's promise of the seed of the woman, the Messiah, and knew the blood sacrifices were a symbol pointing to the true Lamb of God who would come to save us. On the third day, which is coming soon, the nations will be dealt with. Israel will inherit the promises given to her. They will demonstrate to the nations the true nature of spiritual authority on the earth. The church will also exist in the third day as the bride of Jesus Christ. We will reign and rule with the Lord Jesus on this planet.

God removed the walls between Jew and Gentile and created a new man in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus is our peace now. He removed the barriers of religion, race, culture, and language. All of that is secondary to our primary identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the racial and religious strife which we see in the world today is because people refuse to identify themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ we have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit. There is no other way for us to draw near to God. It is the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who washes away all of our sins and makes a way that we can draw near to God in full assurance of faith. It is through the Lord Jesus we can draw near to God in prayer. Jesus is the only way, he is the only truth, he is the only life. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men are saved. Jesus is Lord.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Gentiles have the opportunity to be saved by faith in Jesus just like any Jewish person. The gospel is for all people. The Jewish people are special to the Lord. They are his brethren. It is through the Jewish people the Messiah came into the world. It is through the Jewish people we have the Bible. If not for Israel we would not know the one true God.

Non-Jewish people are no longer strangers to the God of Israel. The Lord Jesus revealed Jehovah God to the entire world. The gospel will be preached in every nation before it is all over.

Paul compared the church to a holy temple. Jesus is the chief cornerstone of this temple. The early church provided the foundation through recording the New Testament and preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. This church is made up of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are the house of God where God's Holy Spirit lives. The church is not the physical wood, brick, or stone buildings with a steeple on top. The church is the people who believe the gospel. The Holy Spirit lives in people now, and not in a building or city. God is everywhere. He is not restricted to one geographical location.

Having said that Jerusalem and the land of Israel is special to God. The Lord put his name on the city of Jerusalem and will one day return and set his foot on the Mount of Olives again.

Apostles and prophets are still with us today. Some may take this verse and try to teach that the apostles and prophets were only needed in the first century but after the scriptures were written we no longer need apostles and prophets. My question is this: do we need pastors? Do we need teachers? Do we need evangelists? Then we certainly still need apostles and prophets today as well. Read **Ephesians 4:11-13**.

Have we all come in the unity of the faith yet? Has we been made a perfect man yet? I think there is still work to do in building the church. This work will not be finished until the Lord Jesus returns and raptures the church. We need all of the gifts which God gave to the church. We need apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We need them in the church. Read **1 Corinthians 12:27-28**.

Ephesians Chapter 3

Ephesians 3:1

Gentiles were brought to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was a Jew and the Bible is Jewish. However, God wanted all nations to receive salvation through Jesus Christ who came through the nation of Israel.

Paul said it was for this reason he was "*Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles*". God appointed Paul to be an apostle for the Gentiles. His ministry was preaching the gospel to the Gentile nations. He traveled the world preaching the gospel, establishing churches, and then defending those churches against false teachers.

Why did Paul call himself a "prisoner". He was in chains by the Roman government. Paul spent a lot of his ministry as a prisoner of the Roman government. This was how he traveled to the city of Rome aboard a slave ship as a prisoner under Roman guard.

But Paul did not say he was a prisoner of Rome. He said he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. No matter what Paul's circumstances he knew God was in control. He saw by faith behind all his circumstances God was in control. The Lord guided Paul no matter how difficult circumstances were. The same is true for us. Read **Psalm 139:1-5**. The Lord knows everything about us. The Lord is good, his plan is good, and he causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him.

Ephesians 3:2-6

What exactly was Paul pointing to when he spoke of this mystery given to the apostles and prophets? Some people say this mystery was the gospel. However, this was not a mystery to John the Baptist. This was not a mystery to Abraham who said God would provide himself a sacrifice. It was not a mystery to Isaiah who graphically portrayed the suffering of the Messiah in **Isaiah 53**.

This mystery Paul talked about was that the Gentiles would be included in the gospel. That was a mystery to people before the church came to be. Even the disciples of the Lord Jesus before Pentecost did not really understand the Messiah was for Gentiles as well as Jews. Though Jesus demonstrated this many times they still did not understand. He showed this when he reached out to the Samaritan woman at the well. He showed this when he ministered to the Centurion with his word of power. He showed this when he healed the Gentile woman's demon possessed daughter. Jesus showed the gospel was for the Gentile as well as the Jew but they did not get it. They were slow to accept that the message of the Messiah was not just for the Jew but for the entire world.

We have the same problem today. People think the gospel is for one group of people instead of the entire world. The gospel is for everyone. Everyone is invited to believe the gospel and be saved.

The mystery of Christ which was hidden was that he would be the Savior of the world and not just the political deliverer for the Jewish people. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world. This gospel was more inclusive than the Jews realized.

The religious leaders attacked Jesus because he ministered to a certain group of people. Jesus reached out to sinners. He reached out to men, women, and children. There was no age group, gender group, no ethnic or religious group which Jesus did not reach out to. The true church today reaches out to the whole world. They do not restrict themselves to one part of society but reach everyone.

Let me repeat myself. The gospel was known from the time of Adam and Eve. God proclaimed the gospel in the garden of Eden when he said the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. This is the first appearance of the gospel in the Bible. Men always knew the gospel from the beginning. This was not the mystery. The mystery was that God wanted to save the entire world and not just the

nation of Israel. It is not God's will for any man to perish but for all men to come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:7-9

Paul was specifically called to serve the Gentiles by preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the humility Paul displayed when he said he was less than the least of all saints. This grace of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was assigned to Paul by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of the original apostles of the Lord Jesus focused their ministry with the Jewish people in Jerusalem. As the Lord Jesus said this gospel spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost ends of the earth.

We think we understand that the gospel is for Jew and Gentile. But there are people who do not act like it. It takes special ministries to preach the gospel to Jewish people. It takes God raising up special ministries to reach people in the inner cities, or in prisons, or in institutions. Why does there need to be special ministries which reach specific groups? I think it is because the church does not see this mystery which Paul talked about. We need to understand the gospel is for everyone. The Lord is calling everyone to believe the gospel.

We say we believe this but do we act like it? Are we reaching people outside of our ethnic or language group? Are we reaching people around the world? Missions needs to be uppermost in the heart of Christians. We need pray the Lord will send forth workers into the harvest and be ready to say to the Lord, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

Ephesians 3:10

What are these principalities and powers in heavenly places? One answer to this is angels. Angels are watching the church. They want to learn about the God they serve and they learn about him by watching what he does through the church on earth.

Read **1 Peter 1:12**. Angels desire to look into these things which pertain to the gospel and the church. They see through the church the revelation of God.

This is what God does. He reveals himself through Israel, he reveals himself through the church, he reveals himself through the nations. ***God is three in one. Prophet, priest, king. Israel, the church, and the kingdom. Three days and all is done in New Jerusalem.***

The angels, no doubt, anxiously watch the developments in the church. The Lord Jesus Christ is returning to earth. He will rapture his people. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The return of the Lord Jesus is the blessed hope of the church.

Ephesians 3:11-13

God's eternal purpose is in Christ Jesus. God's eternal plan and goal and purpose is all in his son Jesus Christ.

Through the Lord Jesus we have confidence to approach God's throne of grace. **Hebrews 4:16**, "*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Paul experienced tribulation and he said it was a result of his relationship with these Christians. He was suffering for them. He said this was their "glory". What does this mean?

What do Christians glory in? We glory in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

In the same pattern these Christians could glory in what Paul suffered for them. Instead of being discouraged that he suffered he said they could glory in his suffering. He knew that he suffered so that they could receive the gospel which gave them life in Christ Jesus.

Each Christian is in the same position as Paul. Each one of us lays down our life so the gospel can continue to spread. We lay down our lives so others can also live.

Do not be ashamed of suffering for the gospel. Do not be ashamed when we suffer as a result of our desire to follow God. It is guaranteed you will suffer in this world if you follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The servant is not greater than his master. Read **2 Timothy 3:12**.

God's eternal purpose is for men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so they can receive eternal life and glorify God forever. The goal is the glory of God. We are called to honor, praise, and glorify God by believing his word, by standing in the gospel, and looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Let us draw near to God with full assurance of faith. Do not be afraid to suffer for the gospel. Keep looking up. Our redemption draws nearer every day.

Ephesians 3:14-16

Paul's prayers for the Ephesians always stands out to me when I read the New Testament. I think these prayers are a pattern of intercession for the church.

He took the position of humility before God the Father. He prayed to the heavenly Father as Jesus taught us to pray. He prayed to God the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Remember Jesus prayed about his Father's name. Read **John 17:26**.

This family on earth and in heaven is brought together in the name of the Father. We draw near to God through his son Jesus and pray in the name of Jesus to the Father.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God would give to them out of the riches of his glory that they be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. We should pray our brothers and sisters in Christ will be strong in the spirit. We pray they may be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in their inner man.

Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. We need to remember the Holy Spirit abides in our heart by faith. We were changed. We were born again. We are no longer in darkness but were

brought out of darkness and into God's marvelous light. We were translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God's son Jesus Christ.

We need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We need a strong spirit to endure what this world will throw at us. We need power from the Holy Spirit to bring the flesh under subjection and to walk in victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Lord, strengthen us with might by your Spirit in our inner man. I pray we may take hold on that for which you took hold on us. Amen.

Ephesians 3:17-19

Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be rooted and grounded in love. He prayed they could know the love of Christ. Then he added that the love of Christ "*which passeth knowledge*". How can we be rooted, grounded, and know this love of Christ if it "*passeth knowledge*". It surpasses the ability to understand it so how can we comprehend the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height of the love of Christ?

Paul pointed to a knowledge that was not intellectual facts or data about God's love. We can memorize the verses. We can know the systems of theology regarding God's love. But there is a love of Christ which Paul prayed for the Ephesians to know which was beyond knowing. It was beyond grasping with the mind.

This is the love which can only be seen with spiritual eyes. It can only be grasped by revelation from God. It was obvious when a man experienced this. It changed how he behaved toward other people.

Our relationship with God goes beyond intellectual understanding. We must grasp with the intuition how much God loves us. We can read the Bible verses and yet not understand the love of Christ. But when God opens our spiritual eyes then we can see it. We see God's love demonstrated through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, through his death, burial, and resurrection. Finally we understand what is beyond comprehension.

Jesus loves me! He died for me! He lives today to intercede and pray for me! He will return again to receive me to himself that where he is I may be also. Hallelujah!

Ephesians 3:20-21

I quote this promise a lot when I pray. I pray for my needs, for the needs of others, and then I say, "*Lord, you are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think.*" I say this because I know God is smarter than me and knows best.

It is always right to humble our hearts and acknowledge we don't know what is best for our lives. I want to always remember to ask God to answer prayers that I could not think to ask because of lack of imagination or a lack of faith on my part.

I am thankful the Lord is free to bless me in ways I could never imagine myself. This has been the story of most of my life. Everything good in my life was unexpected and unplanned. All the good things which I experienced were unexpected surprises from my heavenly Father.

I have lived a much better life than what I could have planned for myself. I might have planned out a life of financial security and stability. I might have planned a life where I had a stable and consistent career. I might have planned a much different life than what I experienced. But I would have missed out on learning so much about God's mercy, God's grace, God's forgiveness. I would have missed out on so much if I had planned out my own life.

I surrender my life today to my loving heavenly Father. I look forward to all he has prepared for me in the future. It will be a future I could not have imagined. It will be a life filled with unexpected surprises and joy from my heavenly Father. Lord, may your will be done.

Ephesians Chapter 4

Ephesians 4:1-3

Paul identified himself as a prisoner of the Lord. He was also a prisoner of Rome, but Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome. He considered himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. This showed Paul had a firm grasp on God's sovereignty. He knew behind every circumstance in life that God was in control. The Lord directed his steps every day. He was therefore a prisoner of the Lord.

He besought the Ephesians. This was different from commanding people. I've served in ministry where men thought they should command and threaten people. How different was the attitude Paul showed here. He appealed to the Ephesians to do the right thing. He did not command them, even though he obviously had authority from the Lord to command people. He did not lord himself over people unlike almost every ministry leader I've encountered. Instead, he humbled himself and appealed to people.

He asked them to walk worthy of the vocation they were called. A vocation, in this context, was more than just a person's job or career. The vocation the Lord called us to is primarily to be a Christian. This means we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We do not relate to the world anymore on the same terms of the world. Instead, we relate to the world on the Lord's terms. The Lord is our provider. A job does not provide for us. The world system does not give us bread. No, our bread comes from God. We live according to every word of God. We don't think like the world does. We do not exalt our name in the hope of gaining power over others. We do not seek to dominate and control other people. Instead, we simply let our light shine for Jesus.

He outlined how we should walk worthy of our vocation. We do this with all lowliness and meekness and with long suffering. We are forbearing of one another. This means an attitude of absolute humility and we consider others better than ourselves. How do we apply this? Do not exalt yourself over people. Look for ways to serve people and to help others. Make it your goal to edify, exhort, and comfort others.

The goal is to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This unity is not the kind of unity which apostate religious systems try to establish. They want us to all agree to whatever is the lowest religious denominator. They want us to agree that everyone has a valid "truth" and to respect the "truth" of others. This is not the unity which the Bible is talking about. Unity in the Bible is based on the truth of the Bible. Our unity must be found in a combination of truth and love for others. We cannot compromise truth and we must love one another. How that works out is accomplished by people living humble and meek lives and being patient with one another.

Ephesians 4:4-6

These verses point us to the narrow path and the straight gate. We enter through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one body. This body is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit. There is only one hope in our calling and that hope is the Lord Jesus. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.

What was Paul saying? One point I get from this is how absolute truth is. Men always want to question God. They always want to have doubts and unbelief about the absolute truth of God. They want to divide into camps and have different ideas about who the Lord is, or about what faith is, or about what baptism is. Each one of these points Paul listed have been causes for church splits and for separate denominations of churches.

No matter what men have done there is still only one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. There is only one Father of all, who is above all, through all, in all.

I am reminded that God hates those who cause strife and division. Read **Proverbs 6:16,19**.

How do we sow discord? We do this when we think too highly of ourselves. We do this when we think we are better than others. We do this when we exalt ourselves over others. We do this when we won't associate with someone because we think we are better than them. This attitude of pride causes discord and division more than anything. I believe this is the basis of all discord and division in the church.

Ephesians 4:7-13

The Lord gave gifts to the church. These gifts are people who serve in the church with specific spiritual ability. Paul listed these gifts to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Some teach we no longer have apostles or prophets but I cannot go along with that. If we have pastors, teachers, and evangelists then we also have apostles and prophets.

I think it is a mistake for men to give themselves titles like "Prophet Smith" or "Apostle Jackson". We are asking for trouble when we put titles into our name. This attracts spirits of pride and exalting of self over others.

However, there are people who have these gifts in the church. People with the true gift of being a prophet or apostle will probably never be known by many. They are unassuming people. They go about serving as the Lord called them. The further you go down this list the more you hear people putting the title in their name. "Pastor" and "Evangelist" are pretty common titles people claim for themselves.

The work of these men is to edify the body of Christ. They are called to help build, encourage, and comfort God's people. This is done in many ways and mostly not from behind a pulpit. There is a lot of work to be done with individuals one at a time. In my opinion those who stand behind a pulpit have little influence. The ones who truly have influence are those who serve others one by one in the body of Jesus Christ. They are usually anonymous servants who go around ministering to the needs of other people.

God has called us to serve one another in love and to use our spiritual gifts for the building of the church.

The goal is that we may all grow into a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:14-16

There is a danger that Christians can be tossed and carried away with winds of doctrine which blow through the church. Many times these waves of doctrines are promoted by men who follow self-interest. They are not interested in building the church as much as building their ministry or their own name or brand. Paul said these men lie in wait to deceive. How do they deceive? All men have to do in order to spread deception is teach by word and example that the gospel is about self-provision, self-provision, or self-worship. When men focus on self and teach man-centered doctrine they appeal to fallen human nature. This deception doubtless brings in money to their ministry and will lead the people in the church further away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The remedy for this problem is for men to speak the truth in love. The goal is spiritual maturity for Christians so that they will not be moved by these deceptive waves of doctrines. Instead, they will be rooted and grounded in the knowledge of God's word. This is one reason I am a big fan of systematic teaching of God's word. I think expository teaching of God's word is important so the church can be grounded in truth.

For most of my young Christian life I was only exposed to topical preaching, and mostly preaching of salvation or holy living or baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, as I went on with the Lord he led me to a church where the Bible was taught systematically chapter by chapter. I grew spiritually as I studied and listened to God's word taught in this method. There is, of course, a place for topical preaching, but I think the church desperately needs to be taught God's word from cover to cover. We need to understand the foundations of what Christians believe so we will not be deceived by winds of doctrines which blow through the church.

Especially in today's world with the mass media that men have and with social media many winds of doctrines blow through the church. It is so important that we stay in God's word and stay in prayer.

Ephesians 4:17-19

Paul instructed the Ephesians to stop living like they were unsaved. They could not live like unbelievers. Paul described unbelievers as men with vain minds, a darkened understanding, and cut off from God because of ignorance. They are callous toward God which results in an immoral life and a continual desire for sin and pleasure.

Sin does not satisfy. The more someone sins the more he wants to sin. It is a downward spiral of intensifying desire which is never satisfied.

This is graphically observed in people caught in drug addiction. I know this because I was saved from this lifestyle as a young man. Once I was saved the Lord allowed me for awhile to help people escape drug addiction, also.

I learned that sin is the root problem of drug addiction. Drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality are symptoms of what Paul described: vain minds, no understanding, ignorant, in darkness, blind hearts, callous, surrendering to a lust for pleasure and sin in increasing intensity.

When a man becomes a Christian he no longer lives this way. The Holy Spirit who lives inside him won't let him. The Holy Spirit continuously pulls at his heart and mind until the man humbles himself and repents.

The unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit living inside him and his conscience becomes callous the longer he persists in sin.

A Christian is not able to persist in sin. He may fall into sin but he hates it. He despises his compromises, temptations, his stumbling in sin. It is not his desire anymore. Sin is an affliction and a source of sorrow for the Christian.

For the unbeliever sin is as natural as a fish swimming in water. It is as natural as breathing in the air.

After a Christian is born again he must be told who he is in Christ. He must learn through teaching and through Bible study that he is a new creation in Christ. The old life of sin is no longer his lifestyle.

Why does a Christian need to be told this? Because old habits continue to control his mind unless his mind is renewed. Just because a man is born again in his spirit does not mean his mind knows the truth about his salvation. His mind must be saved as well.

He must put off the old way of thinking and learn how to live as a Christian. The life of a Christian is a life from heaven. It is not of the earth and men do not automatically know how to live a Christian life, even after they are born again by God's Holy Spirit.

Thank the Lord he gives the church gifts who teach, preach, edify, exhort, encourage, comfort and instruct. We need each person in the body of Christ to work together in building the church.

Ephesians 4:20-24

The Christian, from day one of believing the gospel, enters a process of putting off and putting on. This is difficult, however, unless the Christian understands completely he is a new person (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Through experience I learned that those who do not believe they are a new man in Christ have little victory in putting off the old man and growing into the new man.

The old man is an entire way of thinking and living. It is an attitude of unbelief at the root, but in these roots are entangled attitudes of rebellion, independence, and stubbornness. All these areas need to be exposed and thrown down and replaced with the correct Christian attitude.

This is what people in the church call "discipleship", but when I was a young Christian it was more than just discipleship: it was life or death. In my life it was necessary to throw off the old man as fast as possible. The old man was dying quickly because of drugs. I needed to throw him off and put on the new man as fast as I could.

I changed faster the more I forgot about myself and served other people. The more I studied God's word and put it into practice the more my life changed. This change was accelerated when I had an opportunity to serve in ministry helping the same kind of people I was.

How can we be renewed in the spirit of our mind? I discovered the most important thing in changing my life is to develop the willingness to be corrected. If I would not allow myself to be corrected then I would not grow spiritually. I cannot change my life by myself. I cannot really change unless I put God's word into practice. Obeying God's word means I submit to other people. It means I humble myself. It means I am willing to be corrected, criticized, and yes, even receive rebuke from others.

Why? Because this is the only way to discover the attitudes of the old man inside my head which need to be driven out. Unless those attitudes are exposed they cannot be thrown out and replaced. These attitudes can only be exposed in the context of living the Christian life with other Christian people. It can only be found out in the context of interacting with people. God can use unbelievers to bring out our bad attitudes and show us areas where we need to put off the old man and put on the new man.

Have faith in God he will do this work in your life. All we have to do is believe God, humble our heart, and be ready to accept correction. Do not defend yourself against other people. Even if people who correct you are wrong, just stay quiet, pray about it, and thank the Lord for the lessons he is teaching you. It won't damage anything except your pride to be corrected and it is God's goal for your pride to die. So rejoice!

Ephesians 4:25

The basis for telling the truth, in this context, is our relationship with people in the church. Paul saw the church as a body made of many members, and each one needed the next one in order to function correctly. If one person started lying then everyone would get hurt by this. We are no longer independent when we become Christians. We are part of a larger whole. What we do has an affect on the people around us.

In this verse Paul said we need to put away lying. This is what the ten commandments tell us to do. Thou shalt not lie. Don't bear false witness. Don't exaggerate, mislead, or deceive others. When we lie we are not taking God's side but the side of the devil.

Jesus said the devil is a liar. Read **John 8:44**. Jesus tied lying with murder. All of God's commandments are tied together. When we break one we wind up breaking all of them.

Lying should not be tolerated in a Christian. Before I become a Christian I was a compulsive liar. I told lies when telling the truth would have been easier. I told lies all the time. My entire life was a lie. However, when the Lord Jesus Christ set me free from drug addiction he also set me free from lies. I no longer wanted to tell a lie. I wanted to always tell the truth even when telling the truth would get me into trouble.

Jesus said we can know the truth and the truth will set us free. Lies and the habit of lying will only keep us in bondage to self-worship and sin.

Stop lying! Tell the truth. You'll actually have a lot less anxiety and stress in life by telling the truth all the time.

Ephesians 4:26-27

Jesus showed anger in his life, and yet Jesus never sinned. His anger was righteous and it was holy. Remember he made a whip out of some cords of rope and drove money changers out of the temple area. He overturned their tables. Remember Jesus was angry at the religious leaders because of the hardness of their hearts.

Anger itself is not sin. However, it can become sinful depending upon what we are angry for.

If we are angry because we get our feelings hurt by someone then we are in sin. We should not be angry for selfish reasons but only for righteous reasons. It is righteous to be angry at sin. It is righteous to be angry at the devil and what he does in the world. It is right to be angry at the sin that is in the world.

However, when we are angry because someone violated one of the items on our list of personal rights then we are in sin. I taught a class many years ago called "Anger and Personal Rights". It is one of the Group Studies For New Christians taught at Teen Challenge. In that class we learned that most of the time when we get angry it is because someone violated our personal rights.

What is a personal right? Here are some examples:

I have a right that people respect me. I have a right that people listen to me. I have a right to be heard. I have a right to give my opinion. I have a right to be treated fairly. This is just a sample of thoughts that go through most people's minds. All these thoughts fill our mind because men put themselves first and worship self.

Self worship is a hard way to live. When we worship self we have to work really hard at defending ourselves when other people do not follow our list of personal rights. These are rules we create and expect other people to follow, even if we never listed the rules for them. We just expect other people to know these things and act accordingly. When they don't follow our list of personal rights we get angry. This anger is sinful.

What does this kind of anger do? Look at the next verse: "Neither give place to the devil."

We give the devil access to our life when we insist on defending our personal rights. When we defend self then we are proclaiming our own self righteousness. We are telling others to follow our rules. We are trying to elevate ourselves above other people and control other people. The end result of this behavior is a lifestyle of practical witchcraft. Anger and wrath are in the same list as witchcraft in **Galatians 5:20**.

Anger is the emotion we feel when we think we discern injustice. Most of the time, however, what we see is not true injustice. When someone does not follow our list of personal rights it is because they are doing the exact same thing we are doing. They are trying to enforce their list as well. How can they enforce their list and we enforce our list at the same time? We can't. That is why we fight, argue, and kill each other. The other person won't do what we want them to do so we kill them, literally, figuratively, with our words, or with a gun.

Be angry about the right things. Be angry about what God is angry about. But don't let selfish anger enter your heart. Do not let anger be your response when someone violates your personal rights. Train yourself to be sad, or compassionate, and be quick to forgive others. Do not give the devil a chance to build into your heart and your mind an attitude like he has. Do not let yourself go to war with others in your heart. Instead, forgive others, love others, humble yourself.

Ephesians 4:28

A Christian is productive and gives to other people. Before we were in Jesus we lived for self. Sometimes living for self meant we took things which were not ours. This was not just taking physical items such as paper clips or pens, either. We took people's attention away from God. We stole from God's glory and forced other people to pay attention to us instead.

Paul's context here, however, was probably pointing to being a thief of material resources. Instead of taking things from people we are to instead live a productive life. As we work we then learn how to give to the needs of other people. Instead of being a taker we become a giver.

Some people take all the time. It never enters their mind to do for others expecting nothing in return. These are completely selfish and self-motivated in everything they put their hand to.

Christians should no longer live like this. However, just because a man is born again in his spirit he does not automatically know in his mind he should not take but instead give.

Jesus called the devil a thief. He said Satan comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy but Jesus came to give life to people. The devil is a taker. Jesus is a giver.

Let us follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not follow the devil. Pray that the Lord will give you a hatred of taking and a love for giving to others.

Part of the calling of a Christian is to labor and be productive. We should be ready to meet the needs of other people.

Ephesians 4:29

People tend to confuse "*corrupt communication*" with saying "*negative*" words. Something might seem to be negative on the surface but can actually be edifying and give grace. I know in my life I've experienced correction which did not feel good when I heard it. Sometimes an exhortation, or correction may almost seem negative, but if we will humble ourselves then it becomes grace to us. It builds us up in our faith. I learned this as a young Christian listening to audio cassette tapes from Times Square Church. David Wilkerson could preach messages that seemed very dark and negative, but I learned it was really good for building up the church and ministering grace to those who listened.

Corrupt communication, therefore, is not just negative words. Today's church people are confused about the whole concept of positive and negative words. This doctrine of devils, as far as I know, came through charismatic churches which embraced the prosperity gospel. The roots of it go way back into pagan New Age thinking and philosophy which put on a Christian outer coat.

Corrupt communication is more than cussing. When I was a young Christian and read this verse I would make goals to quit cussing. But corrupt communication is much more than just swearing.

Here are some more verses that touch on speech: **Ephesians 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8; Colossians 4:6; James 3:5-6; Psalm 19:14.**

Ephesians 4:30-32

Here are more things to put off and to put on. This is the pattern we see starting back in verses 22-24. We need to put off the old man. We need to put on the new man. This is not possible without an attitude of humility and a willingness to change, to be corrected, and to be exposed by the light of God's truth. If you are easily offended you won't be able to put on much of the new man. If you get your feelings hurt a lot then it will be more difficult to put off the old man and put on the new man. This is not an easy process. Jesus never said it would be easy. Jesus compared this process to taking up a cross and denying yourself. He clearly showed us this is a journey of loss but what we gain is eternal. We are only losing what is temporary and transient but we are gaining what is eternal and permanent.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal on our lives. The seal points to a specific time in the future which Paul called "the day of redemption". This is when the Lord Jesus returns. This is when we are raised up and receive eternal bodies. Read **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**.

What do we need to put off? We need to put off bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice. Instead, we need to put on kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness. If you are walking in bitterness then admit it, see it, repent of it, get rid of it. Replace bitterness with forgiveness. Do you have wrath and anger? Admit it. Repent of it. Replace it with kindness and tenderness. This is work. This does not come natural. The work is to believe the gospel, trust in the Lord, humble yourself, confess to God where you fail and the Lord will help you. He created this new man in us but we must agree with the work of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to agree with him, to confess, to humble ourselves. The Lord will do his work in us. He is changing us into the image of Jesus. (**Romans 8:29**).

Ephesians Chapter 5

Ephesians 5:1-2

A Christian is to be like Christ. How is Christ? The greatest demonstration of who God is and who the Lord Jesus is can be seen by looking at Calvary. The Lord Jesus Christ gave his life to rescue us, redeem us, and to provide forgiveness for our sins.

In the same way the Lord Jesus loved us we are to love one another. This means we lay down our lives for one another. We give up living for self and instead live for others, especially for those who are in the body of Christ.

The Lord Jesus gave himself as an offering and sacrifice to God. Why did he do this? Because, as the prophet John the Baptist said, the Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, he was buried, and he was rose again on the third day.

The apostle John saw the Lamb of God in heaven. Read **Revelation 5:5-6**.

Jesus often told his disciples about his mission to give his life. He told them he would die on the cross, be buried, and rise again the third day. Peter tried to talk the Lord out of this but the Lord rebuked the devil in the mouth of Peter. If we do not have in our mind the things of God then the enemy can deceive Christians into promoting an agenda that is against God's plan. We should remember this and continue to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man daily. We need every day to be renewed in our mind and put on the mind of Christ. A passive or empty mind is vulnerable to deception and attack from the enemy.

Our purpose is to lay down our lives even as Christ gave himself. Our mission is to intercede for others and give our life to helping others be reconciled to God through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:3-4

A Christian moves towards purity of heart and mind. He is to be clean, pure, and holy for the Lord. If there is a problem with sexual immorality we need to go directly to God's throne of grace and find help. Receive forgiveness, cleansing, and pray for deliverance.

Like Jacob we learn we can no longer live independently of the Lord but must be governed as Israel. We live one day at a time, relying upon God's grace in our weakness, trusting on God's provision of grace to enable us to overcome temptation to sin.

Sexual immorality is a plague on society today. I think every Christian who lives today is like Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. We live in a day of such extreme perversion that our soul is vexed. There is really no where to run and hide in today's world.

We can run to Jesus and abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Don't make excuses for moral failures. Go to the Lord, confess, repent, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Acknowledge you are wrong and God is right.

Paul said we should not even let these sins be named among us. Don't make light of these sins. Don't joke around about sodomites and this perverse society we are surrounded with. Don't make jokes and take these sins lightly. We need to weep and mourn before the Lord for the perversion we are surrounded by in this country and in our world.

Instead of joking about sin we need to thank God for forgiveness in the Lamb of God. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He gave his life so we could be forgiven and delivered. There was a terrible price paid so our sins could be washed away.

Never joke about sin. It leads people to hellfire and damnation every single day. Every day there are people dying in their sins and falling into a pit of darkness from which they will never escape. This is not the time to joke and make light of sin. It is time to mourn, it is time weep, it is time to humble ourselves before the Lord.

May God open our eyes so we can hate sin like he does. May the Lord give us the fear of God so we can depart from all evil.

Ephesians 5:5

Paul stated a fact everyone knows in their conscience. No one who persists in living a life of sin inherits God's kingdom. A person who refuses to acknowledge their sins will not have any part of God's future program and plan.

Paul lists three specific sins here: whore monger, unclean person, and covetous man.

This list includes any person who is immoral, impure, or who lusts after things more than they worship God. This verse should cause each one of us to pause and examine our hearts. We should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Have we gone after immorality or lusted after things? Are we in pursuit of money or in pursuit of the Lord? Are we pursuing immorality or is our heart longing for holiness and purity?

If the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts we will hunger for holiness. We will not be covetous because it will be plain to us how temporary are the pleasures of sin. The pleasures of sin are only for a short season and will cause us to go further away from the Lord. We will not live like this for long if the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. We cannot live like this. The Holy Spirit will not allow anyone who belongs to him to sin and live an immoral life.

Falling into sin is one thing. Being overcome momentarily is one thing. But to continuously live in state where your mind is controlled by sexual immorality where you meditate on lust or continuously covet things? You cannot live like this and live for the Lord. These are two different paths of life. One path leads to death. The path of the Lord leads away from sexual immorality and covetousness.

Paul made a statement of fact. Those who live in a state of sexual immorality and coveting cannot receive an inheritance in God's kingdom.

As a Christian our goal is to receive our inheritance in eternity. Our goal is not to live for this present, temporary time. This present age and world system are passing away. We are no longer living for self and for this world system. Instead, our heart should be set on what will last forever. Our inheritance is not what this world offers, but instead our inheritance is in the Lord. The Lord is our reward. Read **Genesis 15:1**.

Ephesians 5:6-10

Vain words? What would be vain words? Vain words, in this context, are when anyone tells you a Christian can have a lifestyle of covetousness or sexual immorality.

Mega-church preachers promote this all the time. There are so-called pastors in America with thousands of people coming to their churches who promote a message of covetousness and self-worship. They endorse immorality because they never preach against sin. Preaching against sin or condemning sin would be considered "negative" by these preachers. Their entire philosophy is anti-Paul and anti-gospel.

Paul warned us not be deceived by vain words. When people are covetous and have a lifestyle of sexual immorality they prove they are children of disobedience and are under God's wrath.

We are commanded not to be partakers with these people. How are you a partaker with them? Follow a celebrity on Twitter. Congratulations, you are now a partaker with the children of disobedience and in direct disobedience to what the Holy Spirit commands us in this verse.

We are no longer part of the darkness of this world system. We should not follow ungodly entertainers and Hollywood. If you are following these people on Facebook or Twitter you are promoting the works of darkness.

We are light in the Lord. We are to walk as children of the light. We are no longer part of those who live in darkness. We cannot follow them, promote them, and live like them any longer.

Now our goal is to find out what is acceptable to the Lord. We are to put into practice what the Bible teaches us is God's will and God's way for us to live. We cannot live like the world system and expect to receive an inheritance in God's kingdom.

Ephesians 5:11-13

Jesus said his disciples were the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Light exposes darkness. Men do not want the light from Christians because it exposes their evil deeds. It exposes the hypocrisy of unbelievers. Why do unbelievers attack Christians by calling them "hypocrites in that church". I suspect because they know they are the hypocrites. They are made in the image of God but refuse to reflect the God who created them. Instead, they seek darkness and shadows so their evil deeds are not be exposed.

Why would a Christian desire fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Scripture commands Christians to not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. We should let our light shine for Jesus.

Fellowship means agreement. We cannot agree with unbelievers. We are tempted to agree with them because we were once among them. We may sympathize with the darkness unbelievers live in. We have compassion. Therein lies the temptation to get too close. Our human love is not disciplined in the truth enough so we can show God's love by speaking the truth. Instead, we try to relate to unbelievers on a human level. We do not realize by making agreements we lose our power to win them to Christ.

I have seen Christians develop intimate relationships with unbelievers. They kept saying it was to win the unbeliever to Christ. However, it soon became apparent they would not win them to Christ but instead the unbeliever caused them to backslide on God.

When we reprove people it doesn't mean we are rude. We speak the truth in love. We are gentle and kind to people, showing compassion, but we need to be disciplined and uncompromising. We cannot compromise the truth of God's word.

Fellowship and agreement? People make agreements for personal benefit. When we get into financial agreement with unbelievers we forfeit our ability to be light to them. We are putting our own interests before God's interests. Unbelievers will hold you to whatever agreement you make. They use your debt to excuse their guilty conscience. Do not rely on unbelievers to get needs met. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and God will supply your needs. God is our provider. He is our protector. He is our portion.

Another example is romantic involvement with an unbeliever. This is deadly for both the Christian and the unbeliever. We cannot win unbelievers to Christ by having a romantic relationship with them. When we develop intimate emotional relationships with unbelievers we become one with them.

The Holy Spirit will not be one with darkness. You lose your power to live for Jesus if you have fellowship like this with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Read **2 Corinthians 6:14**. Being yoked with someone means you agree with them. You agree with them through emotional attachment and intimacy or by verbally agreeing with what they say.

A Christian should not get into a "conversation" like this with unbelievers. Instead, we are called to speak the truth in love. We are called to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. Reprove means to correct. It means to expose the darkness with the light of God's word which we have in our heart. Read **2 Timothy 3:16 and Psalm 37:30-31**.

Ephesians 5:14-17

Those dead in sin are asleep. They think they are awake but they are asleep at the wheel of their lives. Life is passing them by and they cannot understand or see it or understand it.

Scripture commands us to awake from this sleep of death and to get up out of the grave of unbelief. The Lord will give us light for living.

The Lord gives light, wisdom, understanding and everything we need to live for him in this world. By faith we are raised to life with the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ we pass from death to life. We receive life and light so we can truly live. The devil brings death but Jesus gives abundant life.

As those who are in the light we need to live carefully. We need to think carefully about decisions in life. We need to live in the light of what we know from scripture and from the Lord. If the Lord speaks to you then walk in the revelation of his word. Don't live like you don't know the truth. Live in agreement with the truth you know.

Be careful how you spend your life. Use your time in this life to invest in what is eternal. I have always prayed since I was a young Christian that I could invest my time and energy into what would count for eternity. What will count in eternity? God's word and the souls of men. I pray the Lord would use me to proclaim his word and to bring many people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to be good stewards of the time we have because the days truly are evil. The world will suck the life out of you. If you are not careful you won't have anything left to give to the Lord. You can spend your entire life just providing for self, protecting self, and worshiping self.

When will we begin to put into practice what the Bible says? When will we begin to help others and serve others? When will we begin to lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel?

Pray that you can take hold on what Christ took hold on you for. Pray that you can know God's will for your life. Pray that you can walk in his will for your life. It takes faith and it takes courage and it takes endurance to do this.

I have failed many times to persevere. I gave up at crucial moments in my life. If I had only persevered things would have gotten better and I would be in a much different place today.

It is time to believe God's word. It is time to trust the Lord. It is time to believe, to trust in him, and to stand on his promises. It is time to be still and see the salvation of the Lord.

I have no power, I have no plan, but my eyes are on you, Lord Jesus.

Ephesians 5:18-20

What does someone filled with the Spirit act like? They speak to themselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. They sing and make melody in their heart to the Lord. They have a habit of always giving thanks to God for all things.

Here we are commanded to not be drunk with wine. This is so clear it is hard for me to comprehend how Christians can justify drinking alcohol. How much alcohol can you drink before you are drunk? Why take the chance of getting drunk?

When Christians drink alcohol they show by their actions they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They love to feel good more than they love to worship God.

They might be born again but their minds are overthrown by the lies of the devil and the world system.

An overcoming Christian will not drink alcohol. A backsliding Christian and a compromising Christian drinks alcohol. It is a bad witness. It is a bad testimony and it grieves the Holy Spirit when a Christian drinks alcohol.

I'm speaking the truth in love. It is plain but this is a severe problem in the lives of many people. It was a bad problem in my life and has at times been a temptation. We must say no to this temptation and say yes to Jesus.

Instead of being drunk on wine instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. Alcohol cannot provide the peace and joy in life which the Holy Spirit can give.

It is a good idea to learn as many praise and worship songs as you can. It is good to sing praises to the Lord, and not just when you are in church. Memorize hymns. Learn the great old hymns and sing them to yourself and God. This is a great way to keep your heart fixed on the Lord Jesus throughout the day.

Get into the habit of giving thanks in all things. This shows we have faith in the power and control of God over our life. Nothing in our life happens without God's permission. If the Lord allows it then we can endure and give thanks to him in the middle of it. Sometimes we may have to endure an experience like Job but God will be with us in the fiery trial. Keep singing the songs of praise, keep giving thanks, and you will come out on the other side. The Lord is faithful. He will carry on to completion the good work he started in your life.

Ephesians 5:21-24

Submission to authority is a basic Christian teaching for every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is actually impossible to be a disciple of Jesus and a follower of God and not submit to authority. This is truly basic Christian living. Paul taught here about wives submitting to their husbands, but he also said "*submitting yourself one to another in the fear of God*". There is a mutual submission in marriage but there is a specific role of the wife which Paul taught here. The husband was the leader in marriage. Just as Christ is the leader of the church. Paul drew a comparison between the marriage relationship and Christ's relationship to the church.

God specifically designed and created each of us to fulfill a role and function. We cannot fill a function for something we were not created for. What we see today with feminism is rebellion against the order and design of God.

A godly woman has an attitude of submission toward God and her husband. Submission is an attitude that all Christians have toward God and also toward our role in family, work, life, country, and the church. Without an attitude of submission then we will go through life thinking we do as we please. This inevitably leads to complete confusion and a feeling of wandering through life. That "lost" feeling comes from rebellion against God's order and God's design. It is only when we submit to how God made us and the universe that we find true joy, peace, and purpose in life.

Ephesians 5:25-33

This scripture is difficult to break down into smaller units because it begins and ends with an exhortation for husbands to love their wives so it is all one section but there is a lot within this section.

The takeaway for me is to love my wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In other words, husbands love their wives and lay down their life for them. They are to love their wives in the same way Jesus loved the church. How did Jesus love the church? He died for her. He gave his life on Calvary to purchase this bride and make her his own.

We see also Paul quoted scripture in Genesis about marriage. He quoted this and also the Lord Jesus Christ quoted this in Genesis. This is an important passage of scripture for us to know, understand, and stand on. This scripture about marriage is more important today when the devil is tearing apart the family. There is so much confusion, propaganda, and lies about men, women, marriage, and the family today. This is why it is important for us to hold on tightly to the truth in God's word about marriage. Marriage is between a man and a woman. This marriage is before God. When a man and a woman are married they become one. They become one flesh.

Paul is pointing to something beyond just marriage in this passage. He pointed to the relationship which the Lord Jesus has with the church. No wonder marriage and the family are attacked by lies and propaganda. Satan wants to distort and destroy marriage and the family because this is a picture which points to the reality of Christ and the church.

Jesus has a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. This is the reality of the situation with the bride of Christ. Within the outward structure of this modern church there is a hidden remnant of believing overcomers who make up the bride. The Lord will bring out this bride in the rapture. He will receive

her to himself that where he is she may be also. This is our blessed hope and the destiny of this glorious church without spot or wrinkle.

Ephesians Chapter 6

Ephesians 6:1-4

We can't get any more plain than this. Children, obey your parents. Do this because God said so and it is right. Beyond just obedience children should honor their parents. This is one of the ten commandments which has a promise attached to it. Why honor your parents? So you will live a long life. When the law was first given to Israel if a child did not obey their parents or honor their parents they did not live a long life. The same is true today, as well. Those who rebel against authority, starting with parents, and who dishonor their parents, will more than likely not live a long, full life. Rebellion always bring hardship, pain, and suffering. The way of the transgressor is hard.

Here was an instruction to fathers on raising kids. Fathers were told how to raise kids, whereas there was no instruction to mothers on raising children. Fathers were told not to provoke their children to wrath. I think this means fathers can be hard on children. There is a danger that the child might lose hope and rebel against the father. How can fathers do this? Kids need discipline but they don't need to be punched in the face or have a branch off a tree broke over their backs. Don't abuse the child. Children need godly discipline but they do not need to have their spirit broken.

Fathers were instructed to train their children in the Lord. This means taking time to teach, to show attention, to listen, to understand their children. It takes time to love children and to bring them up in a nurturing instruction.

I did not have this growing up, but my heavenly Father provided several men who provided godly discipline and instruction for me. I am thankful for those men who became fathers to me when I did not have a father at home. I am thankful the Lord showed me mercy and grace and extended his love towards me through godly men who nurtured and disciplined me.

Ephesians 6:5-9

Servants could also be "slaves". Slavery was common in human history and was common during the period Paul lived in. These servants came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus and needed instruction on how to live as a Christian. Paul taught them to be obedient and to have an attitude of reverence and respect. Paul taught that by serving their masters they were serving Christ. They served their masters as serving Christ Jesus the Lord. This runs against rebellious human nature which does not want to submit to others. Humans are born with an attitude of rebellion against authority, but especially against any authority that culture says is unacceptable.

Of course, slavery was wrong. But the Bible did not address slavery as a topic. Instead, it taught slaves to live for Christ in the situation they were in.

The principle was to live for the Lord no matter what situation we are in. No matter where we may be we must see our labor as working for the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are a Christian then we are servants of Christ. We are bond-slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Masters were instructed as well. They were forbidden to threaten those which they have authority over. They were taught to remember that their Master was Christ himself and they were to be the same kind of master that the Lord Jesus Christ was.

What kind of master is the Lord Jesus? We are to be the same kind of masters. What kind of servant is the Lord Jesus? We are to be the same kind of servants.

Jesus is all in all.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Only after we know who we are in Christ and have sat down with the Lord in the heavenly places, and only after we are walking in victory, only then can we take our stand against the wiles of the devil.

There is a real enemy for the Christian. This enemy goes through the whole world looking for someone to devour. He is like a lion always on the prowl and looking for victims to take down.

This battle against the enemy never ends while we are on this side of eternity. We must always be on guard against this enemy. How do we prepare? How do we fight?

Paul gave instructions in this final chapter of Ephesians on how to prepare and fight this enemy.

We must be strong in the Lord! How are we strong in the Lord? We do not put any confidence in our ability to fight or overcome or stand. We put our complete faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the work he accomplished at Calvary. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Our faith is in his finished, completed work.

The way to be strong in the Lord is to hold the gospel and reject all the lies of the world system, religions, and the allure of prestige in the world. We take our stand and overcome by humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is by humility we overcome self, sin, the world, and the devil. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. When we humble ourselves before the Lord then he will lift us up.

Our battle is the Lord's battle. He has fought and won this battle on our behalf. Our part is to have faith and stand in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't be moved from the gospel to something else. The world has a lot of alternatives it offers to replace the gospel. There are many religions out there in the world and many systems of philosophy. But the name of Jesus is above all other names. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Paul described the whole armor of God. He used a word picture to describe spiritual things. He used something he saw every day in the Roman world. He looked at the armor the Roman soldiers and thought that would make a good illustration of how the Christian should be prepared spiritually. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Our battle is against the power of darkness. We also have armor we need to put on every day just like a Roman soldier put on his armor every day.

As far back as I can remember I put on the armor of God while praying. I understand this is a word picture but brought me comfort to think of myself putting on armor every day. Lord, help me to put on

the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:12

The Christian battle is not against people but against the powers of darkness behind people. Satan is behind the evil people in the world. These spiritual powers of darkness use men, manipulate and deceive men, and then destroy men. People are not the enemy of the Christian. People are victims of the enemy. We pray for people that their eyes will be opened and so they may know the truth. Instead, we focus our attack on the spiritual problem behind what people do in this world.

This battle is fought through prayer. We stay in God's word, meditate on it, and put it into practice in our daily living. Praying and interceding for people is how we fight against the powers of darkness behind the lives of people.

Realize there is a spiritual battle. The Bible is filled with examples of this spiritual battle taking place. Whether we want to believe it or not this spiritual battle takes place around us every day.

The Bible teaches us that these powers of darkness are in "high places". This means at the top of the political and religious world the powers of darkness are in control. The entire world system is in darkness, and there are powers of darkness in control behind the scenes of these presidents and kings.

Do not put your hope in what man can do. I know many Christians are strong in political involvement, but this is not our primary battle. Our primary battle is in prayer, intercession, and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is easy to focus on people when there is a problem but consider that this person is not the source of our oppression. The real problem is in the spiritual world where the power of darkness works through people. Remember to have compassion on people and realize they are victims of the enemy. Understanding this set me free from a lot of bitterness when I was a young Christian. I realized that the people who did me harm were instruments of the enemy. They were responsible for their actions but it made it easier for me to forgive when I realized they were victims of the enemy.

Men are in darkness. They do not understand that they are manipulated by evil spirits. Most of the evil men do is in ignorance. I am reminded of how Jesus prayed on the cross. *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

Ephesians 6:13-18

Paul exhorted us to put on the full armor of God. The reason we put on the whole armor of God is so we can withstand the evil day and after we did all we could then continue to stand.

The idea of standing our ground is what an army does during a war. They seize ground and then maintain what they take. They maintain that ground by standing on it. They occupy the ground which they win from the enemy. In a similar way we stand upon the ground the Lord Jesus won for us.

Jesus went to the cross, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. We are to stand on the sacred ground of the finished work of Christ Jesus. We are to firmly reject every alternative to

the gospel. The world is filled with pseudo-spiritual alternatives to the gospel. There are step programs, philosophy, and world religions. All these are weapons of the enemy to keep people blinded to the truth of the gospel. Read **2 Corinthians 4:4**.

The "god of this world" is none other than the devil. The devil told Jesus that he would offer him all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship him. The devil has some power over the world system. However, this world system is not what the Lord is after. The Lord Jesus is after another kingdom altogether.

What are the pieces of armor Paul listed for us? The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.

We need to be people of truth. We need to speak the truth, walk in the truth, and live in the truth. We need the Holy Spirit every day to expose darkness or lies in our life and enable us to live in the truth. The truth will endure, but lies will pass away.

All of our righteousness is filthy rags. Read **Isaiah 64:6**. The righteousness that we need is the righteousness of God. Through what Christ accomplished the Lord imputes to us his righteousness. In order to receive God's righteousness we must surrender our righteousness. This means total surrender of our personal rights. We no longer hold our personal rights. This means we no longer defend ourselves. We trust in God's protection. We trust in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus to defend us from the slander of Satan.

The gospel of peace should guide our footsteps always. We need to walk in the gospel every day. The gospel of peace is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This is our peace. There is no peace outside the gospel of Jesus Christ. People have a false peace which the enemy gives people to keep them in bondage to sin. But the peace that God gives cannot be taken away by the world. God's peace surpasses all understanding. Read **Philippians 4:7**.

Without faith it is impossible to please God because the one who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Faith is how we are saved. We have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have faith in what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us. We have faith in the invisible God. We walk by faith and not by sight. This is the life of a Christian. Our life is faith from beginning to end. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. We must look to him every day and keep on looking to him. This faith is a shield around us. It protects us from the attack of the enemy. When the enemy attacks us with flaming arrows then we can lift up this shield of faith. We can stand on God's promises in his word and extinguish the missiles of the devil.

Finally we have God's word. This is the sword of the Spirit. We need to learn God's word. We must hide God's word in our heart. We need to meditate on God's word day and night. Along with staying in the word, we must also stay in prayer. We must persevere in prayer and stay in the word. These go together. Word and prayer. Prayer and word.

Finally, after we have done all we can then continue to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The battle belongs to the Lord. He gives us the victory. He made us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loves us. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

Ephesians 6:19-24

I think it is interesting that the apostle the Lord used to write the majority of the letters in the New Testament requested prayer for himself that he could be bold in his proclamation of the gospel. Paul prayed "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly". I think this is amazing that such a man of God would feel his own weakness in preaching the gospel. This helps me realize that no matter how weak I feel God can still use me if I pray. If we pray and ask God to open the door to serve him and preach the gospel then he will do this.

These are Paul's concluding remarks in his letter to the Ephesians. He closed this letter the same way he usually did by extending grace from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember to pray for those who proclaim the gospel. Let's remember to lift up our pastor, and teachers, and evangelists, and prophets, and apostles. Let us pray for those God who proclaim God's word. There are missionaries who have given their lives to further the gospel in foreign countries. Let's not forget to pray for them. Pray for opportunities in your life to share the gospel.

The Lord can deliver us from the fear of man and give us boldness to share the gospel with people we come in contact with.

The Epistle to the Philippians

Philippians Chapter 1

Philippians 1:1-2

Paul included Timothy in his greeting to the Philippians. Paul did not consider himself a lone worker in ministry. He worked with others to spread the gospel. He called himself and Timothy "servants of Jesus Christ". This could be translated "slaves" of Jesus Christ. We are a slave to sin which leads to death or we are slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what we choose men are created as servants and will serve one or the other. Men worship themselves or they worship God.

He greeted the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi and extended this greeting to the "bishops and deacons". There were "saints" in the church and there were people with the responsibility of watching over the church. The bishops and deacons were provided to guide, watch, and organize the business of the church.

Paul extended grace and peace to this church. This was a common greeting from Paul in his letters. Grace was a Greek word and peace a Jewish word. This is appropriate for the church which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles in one new house of faith. The church is the body of Jesus Christ and is composed of both Jew and Gentile believers.

This grace and peace comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is God and the Father is God. We have a problem if we reject the triune nature of God. If we reject that God is three in one then we eventually reject that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. We must have both in order for the gospel to save us.

Philippians 1:3-7

Paul started his letter by saying he prayed for them. This was encouraging to know someone prayed for them. We should remember Jesus prays for us. The Bible says that Jesus "*ever lives to make intercession for us*". He is our high priest forever.

Paul thanked God when he remembered them. We need to be thankful for Christians we know. The Christians we have known in our past should inspire thanksgiving. Can you remember the Christians in your life who influenced you to come to faith in Jesus? I do! I remember most of their names and faces. I thank God for them. I thank God for the Christians he used to turn me from destroying myself. He turned me toward himself by using faithful Christians.

When we pray for others it brings joy to our heart. When I think of Christians in my life, those who inspired me to know the Lord, it brings joy to me thinking about them. I should think about them more often. Let's remember to give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ and be joyful when we hear good news about them.

They were partners with Paul in ministry. He said they were part of his fellowship in the gospel. They supported him from the early days of ministry. Because of his relationship with them he could confidently say that God who started a good work in them would carry that good work to completion. That completion for all of us will come when Jesus Christ returns for the church. I believe that day is not far off when the church will be raptured. We will be caught up to meet the Lord and so shall we ever be with the Lord forever! Amen.

Paul had them in his heart. It did not matter what his circumstances were. At that time he was a prisoner of Rome but he considered himself a prisoner of the Lord. No matter where he was Paul preached the gospel. Most of what we have from Paul's ministry are his letters. He wrote to churches from prison. Paul told the Philippians they were partners with him in the gospel.

Anytime we help support a ministry we take part in that ministry. We also receive rewards with those we support. If we work together with them we are part of that ministry. We receive a reward along with them.

How can we be part of a ministry? Start by being thankful for brothers and sisters in Christ. Start by praying and thanking God for them. This changes our attitude toward others and when opportunities arise we can seize it.

Philippians 1:8-11

People are confused about the word "love". Today people assign the word "love" a meaning as far from the Bible as one can get. Paul taught "love" should abound "in knowledge and in all judgment". This means biblical love exists in the context of truth. Love is in the context of purity and holiness.

Jesus said the world will know we are Christians by our love for one another. But what kind of love is this? Certainly he did not mean sexual love. I don't think he meant familiar or brotherly love. Jesus meant that the world would know we are Christians because we lay down our life for others. We give our lives to help people. We are not self-centered or selfish people. We are focused on the needs of

others. We do not put ourselves first. We are not self-worshippers. Instead, we love God and we love one another.

This love is not always an emotion. There may be times of emotion but biblical love is commitment. It is an act of one's will to put other people before ourselves. This love involves the will and involves the mind. This love requires the power of God to be active in us.

People may help someone for selfish reasons. Sometimes people help others because they need to feel important. They give and it appears they love people. Behind the giving, however, is a motive of self-love. They want to be recognized. They want people to follow them and do what they say. This is worldly love.

As we grow in the truth we will discern selfish "love". Don't give with a motive of receiving back. Lay down your life for Christ. We offer ourselves to God because we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus asked Peter, "*Do you love me?*" He asked him three times; one time for each denial. Peter replied, "*Lord, you know I love you.*" Prove that you love God by growing in biblical love.

Philippians 1:12-18

Paul said his imprisonment helped further the gospel. This reminds me of **Romans 8:28**. All things work together for the good of those who love God! Paul understood that despite his suffering the gospel was advanced through his testimony. He noticed everyone in the palace knew who he was. Everyone knew he was a Christian and his imprisonment was for preaching the gospel.

As a result others were encouraged to preach the gospel. Why? Did they want to get locked up as well? They loved Paul and when they saw his courage it inspired them to pick up the torch. It is persecution against Christians which lights the fire of revival.

Paul knew that not everyone in ministry had good motives. He knew some about him and wished him harm. They hated the gospel and Paul. Instead of directly attacking the church they joined the church and worked from the inside to destroy it. Paul saw this and knew God was in control. It did not matter if the person was for or against him. This is true in our lives. No matter if a person is for or against us God can use them to further his plan for our lives.

Paul was satisfied to know the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached. People talked about Jesus Christ. That is all that mattered to Paul.

Philippians 1:19-26

Paul saw the possibility that he could die as a prisoner. No doubt he knew the story of John the Baptist and how he was martyred. There were Christians losing their life during this time in the early church. Paul's attitude was that for him to die would be better. He knew if he died he would be with the Lord which was much better than life in the body. However, he also realized that for him to continue living in the body would benefit the Philippians. He was torn between the two options. He had a desire to depart and be with the Lord but he knew he would stay so he could continue to help them.

Paul's desire was that by life or death Christ would be magnified in him. This is the goal of every Christian. Our intense goal is that our life bring glory to God. Pray our life will honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray our living and dying will honor and glorify God.

In this passage Paul had no fear of death. This is the attitude of the Christian. Why should we fear death? The Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the heart and foundation of our faith. How can a Christian believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and still be afraid to die? We should never fear death. For the Christian it will be like going to sleep and waking up from a dream. This current life will be like a dream when we wake up in the real world, which is the presence of God in heaven. That is the real world we are living for. We are not living for this temporary existence on earth. Our true home is the New Jerusalem. Hallelujah, and we will get there one day. By faith we put one foot in front of the next and trust that Jesus will carry on to completion the good work he started in us.

Philippians 1:27-30

Paul taught that suffering is part of the Christian's life. We learn suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. It was given to us to suffer in behalf of Christ. We not only believe in Jesus but we also suffer for his sake. What does this mean?

For a Christian to live in this world system means suffering. The goal of the Christian contradicts everything the world system stands for. The Christian faces opposition from unbelievers in every direction. He will be surrounded by people who are in opposition to him. There will be suffering. In some parts of the world this opposition means martyrdom. In other places it might mean loss of opportunities or discrimination.

Suffering is not something to run from. God has a purpose in allowing the Christian to suffer. It helps conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. It helps us cling to faith in the Lord Jesus. It can be a witness to the world and lead others to faith in Jesus. It has been said that martyrdom is the seed of the church. The more Christians are persecuted the stronger the church becomes.

Paul suffered for preaching the gospel. Do we think we are better than the apostle Paul? The Lord Jesus suffered. Are we better than him? No, we are no better than the Lord Jesus or the apostle Paul. We can expect if we are living for the Lord we will suffer the consequences. But the end result is heaven and our eternal reward.

Philippians Chapter 2

Philippians 2:1-4

The key to unity in the church is humility and putting others first. Paul asked the Philippians to unite in the same Spirit so he could rejoice in them. There is real cause for Christians to rejoice in the unity of fellowship. We can rejoice when we are united because the church is more effective as a witness to the world when we are united.

I'm convinced what we have with denominations is caused by men controlled by pride. Men are followers of men's names or men's teachings. Those who disagree with a big name theologian create their own group of Christians. The result is splintering Christians into camps who debate one another.

Some even believe the purpose of church is debating systems of theology. I've met people who believed in systematic theology more than they believed in Jesus.

We must maintain humility and put the needs of other people before ourselves. This takes being a broken person. Humility does not come natural to the human heart. We are born thinking the world revolves around us and that nobody else matters. Paul gives us the greatest example of humility and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11

Paul described the attitude of the Lord Jesus. When he did this he immediately exhorted Christians to be exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ in this attitude. What is the description of the Lord Jesus that Paul gave us? The one word which summarizes this description of the Lord Jesus is "humility".

Our attitude should be humility and serving others. Jesus is God. When he came to the earth as a man he temporarily laid aside his power as God and became a man. As a man he relied on the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, and give him spiritual power. He showed us how to live as a man in a right relationship with God.

He showed us how to defeat Satan. How did he defeat Satan? He defeated Satan by humility and being a servant. He made himself of no reputation. He did not exalt himself. Instead he exalted God the Father. He said whatever he did was because he saw his Father do it. He only spoke what the Father spoke. He only did what he saw his Father do. This is how we know that one of the basic qualities of God is humility. How can this be? How can the Creator of the entire universe be humble? And yet he is. We see the humility of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

To be like God is to walk in humility and have the attitude of a servant. This is what the Lord is like. This is what God is like. When we exalt self and control people through deceit or manipulation then we act like the devil. However, when we serve in humility we walk in the Spirit and live out the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God the Father exalted the Lord Jesus Christ. His name is greater than any other name. He humbled himself and died on the cross. God now has exalted him above all things. At the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

A day will come when even the devil will bow his knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But then it will be too late for him and too late for those who followed him. Their future is the lake of fire.

It is important to humble ourselves right now. Repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn to God with all our heart and believe the gospel. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

Philippians 2:12-13

Working out salvation does not mean working for salvation. Salvation was accomplished when Christ died for our sin on the cross. Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. This

was complete salvation. There is nothing we can add or take away from what the Lord Jesus accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Working out salvation means we discover for ourselves in daily living how real the Lord Jesus is. The gospel impacts our daily living in many ways. We received a new heart and a new life when we were born again by the Holy Spirit. This new life changes our goal. We are no longer self-centered. We no longer worship self and live for self. Now we live for him who died for us and rose again. It is a life based on a different principle than what the world system understands.

Those who do not believe the gospel live by the lie of Satan that we are gods. We are the masters of our lives. This is a complete lie. Man was not made in his own image. We were made in the image of God. We were created to reflect our Creator.

Working out salvation means we learn daily how to live in a fallen world as someone who belongs to another world. We learn to humble ourselves. We learn to serve others. We learn to put others before ourselves. This is what it means to work out salvation. We learn how to apply the eternal truth of God's word to our everyday life situations.

The Holy Spirit lives in us and he teaches us to deny ourselves. He teaches us to walk in light within a dark world. He teaches us to engage the world system not on the basis of the world's rules but on the basis of God's kingdom. We are in the world but we are certainly not of this world or a part of this present world system. Our life is in Christ Jesus our Lord and we live out his life continually each day. As we do this others who are called to eternal life will be drawn to us. We will have opportunities to teach others what the Lord Jesus taught us. We will have opportunities to give what the Lord gave us.

Philippians 2:14-16

Paul's heart was set on the "*day of Christ*". His goal was to rejoice when the Lord Jesus returned and set up his kingdom. What is the one thing that will give joy when Jesus Christ returns? Our greatest joy will be when we see people that God used us to bring into his kingdom. Our greatest happiness will be the same as what makes the Lord happy. Think about it. The Bible says when Jesus went to the cross that he endured it because of the joy set before him. What was that joy? It was knowing that through his death, burial, and resurrection he would bring many people into God's kingdom. He was making a way for many people to escape the condemnation and judgment of Satan and this fallen world.

This is the Christian's highest happiness. To see someone we prayed for, someone we witnessed to, someone we built a friendship with come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can we influence people to come to the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul made it simple and easy for anyone to understand. He told Christians to stop complaining. Stop murmuring! Stop disputing! If we would just do this then we could see people come to Christ and be saved. If our lives reflect an attitude of praise, thanksgiving, and humility we will draw people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Christians complain it gives unbelievers reason to find fault. They have a reason to rebuke us. Paul said that we should never complain, murmur, or dispute, so that our lives will shine as bright as a star in the night sky.

Only when our lives are salt and light can we truly proclaim the gospel and it will have power to convict the conscience and bring salvation.

Philippians 2:17-23

Paul mentioned his son Timothy. His words show he cared for and loved Timothy. He said that he had no one who was as like-minded. Timothy was Paul's son like Joshua was Moses' son. They were men who moved in the same spirit as their leader.

Paul made an interesting observation. He said "all seek their own and not the things which are Jesus Christ's". What did this mean? It meant that the natural man always puts self first. Those who do not live for Christ will automatically live for self first. This is man's natural inclination. Man is a natural self-worshiper. Idolatry flows from the heart of a man who does not believe in the Most High God.

The only way to be delivered from a self-centered life is to live for Jesus Christ. When we seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness we find out the Lord takes care of us. He becomes our provision and protection. He is our provider and protector. We do not need to be concerned with living for self. Instead, we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus Christ. The Lord himself is our portion.

The Spirit filled life is not lived for self. Instead, we put the interest of Jesus Christ above our own interest. The Lord's interest is his people. We are called to wash the feet of the saints.

Philippians 2:24-30

Why did the Holy Spirit include an example of a Christian who was sick. Obviously Ephaphroditus was a man of God and filled with faith. It was not a lack of faith that led him to being sick. It was not because he had sin in his life. The Holy Spirit said this man loved the church, he loved Paul, and he was near to death because he helped Paul when the Philippians did not.

When I read this I am reminded of the American health and wealth gospel. It is shallow false teaching. This false gospel is leaven in the bread of the church. It permeates churches because of today's information super highway. Everyone can subscribe to podcasts of false teachers. Everyone can listen and watch YouTube videos promoting false doctrines that blow through the church.

The doctrine that Christians should always have good health is a lie. It is a false doctrine. How do I know this? Because I read my Bible. Because I can read the scriptures right here in Philippians. A man of God who helped Paul was sick. Paul was not able to heal him. In the book of Acts Paul laid hands on people and they were healed by God. But here is a man who is sick and Paul cannot heal him. What does this tell us? It tells us Christians get sick. It is not because of a lack of faith or because they have sin. It is because we live in a fallen world.

I like what I heard a preacher say one time: "*nobody yet has died of good health.*" And we will all die if the Lord tarries the rapture.

Philippians Chapter 3

Philippians 3:1-3

It is important to rejoice in the Lord! What is the alternative? Should Christians go around letting their bottom lip drag on the ground? No! I don't think Paul was telling us to pretend like we are happy either.

This is not a matter of just making yourself "be happy". There are people whose circumstances make it impossible to put on a happy face and pretend like everything is great. I don't think Paul was saying that.

This is deeper than happiness. Happiness depends on having things like we want them to be. Life will certainly not cooperate with us in making us feel happy all the time.

We can rejoice in the Lord. This is not something we do just some of the time because Paul said to rejoice in the Lord always!

What is this rejoicing? I don't think I can describe it very well. It does not depend on emotions or willpower. It is something a man of God draws on deep in his spirit. Out of the depths of the spirit there is a well of life which we can draw on. By faith we see through the Lord's eyes and when we do we are satisfied. We are satisfied even if our circumstances are falling apart. We are satisfied in the Lord Jesus.

This joy comes from abiding in the Lord. This joy comes from having the mind renewed by God's word. This joy comes when we believe God's word more than our emotions. This joy comes when we believe God's word when everything around us contradicts God's word. This joy comes when our mind automatically leaps to God's word when everyone else is spewing lies.

We can rejoice in the Lord. We can do this by faith. We can experience this. It is something the Lord wants to give every Christian.

Paul warned them to beware of three different groups of people. One group was "dogs", one group was "evil workers", and another group was "the concision".

"Dogs" in the Bible points to Gentiles or unbelievers. People who are outside "of the household of faith". Today this points to anyone not a Christian and those who are not outwardly religious. These are people who do their own thing. Why are warned about people like this? Because if you are around them you can be influenced by their spiritual apathy. You can adopt their attitude. We must never allow ourselves to adopt a passive attitude and be unwilling to make waves because of our faith.

Another group is "evil workers". These people are in the church but they do not have the Holy Spirit. They actively participate in ministry. They promote a false gospel in subtle ways. Instead of magnifying the gospel they magnify the Ten Commandments. These people talk about Jesus but they do not know him. They do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. They may know Bible doctrine but they have no spiritual life. They cannot impart spiritual life to others. These people fill dead churches.

The last group is "the concision". In Paul's day these were religious people who were actively subverting the church. Some infiltrated the early church and tried to convince new believers to be circumcised in order to be true believers. Paul rebuked them in the letter to the Galatians.

If anyone tries to convince you to become a follower of the "Torah" run away from them. There are many modern day people who are of "the concision". They will try to lure you back into following Jewish rules and regulations. One of these movements that I am aware of is called the "Hebrew roots" movement. Be careful of people who change the English name "Jesus" into the Hebrew word "Yeshua" or all the other variant names like "Yahweh" or "Jehovah". These people might be setting you up to get involved into religious legalism. When people cannot use the plain word "Jesus" like we have in the English Bible they might have an agenda. To me it smells of spiritual pride and elitism.

Philippians 3:4-11

There were people competing with Paul's ministry. The problem was that these people were promoting false gospels and Paul defended his gospel by pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These false apostles attempted to prove their authenticity through tribal or religious pedigree. Paul laughed at this because his pedigree was better than all of them and yet he said he considered his pedigree worthless. All his past accomplishments and family background paled in comparison to knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here the attitude of the world within religion is exposed. People establish authority in a lot of ways. The false apostles attempted to establish themselves by pointing to family upbringing, to titles, and to accomplishments. Paul said this is garbage compared to knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's claim to authenticity came from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. He said he suffered the loss of all things in order that he might know the Lord Jesus more and more. He was willing to give up everything in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

The end result of a life of faith in Jesus is resurrection. Paul's goal was to be raised up to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. His goal was not to make a name for himself in this world. He was not trying to create something for himself. Instead, he lost everything that he might gain the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confidence in the flesh is to think like the world system. How does the world think? The world thinks a man is somebody if he has a title. The world thinks a man is somebody important if he comes from a good family and has a big name. This is how the world thinks. Paul showed us that God thinks much differently than the way men do. Read **Isaiah 55:8-9**.

Philippians 3:12-14

Paul recognized he had not yet arrived. Arrival comes when we are with the Lord Jesus and inherit our resurrection body. Paul said he had not reached the goal yet. What did he do then? He continued to press forward in his relationship with the Lord. He wanted to take hold on all that Christ took hold on him for. Why did Jesus save me? Yes, it is so I can go to heaven. But what is God's purpose in saving me until I reach heaven?

In order to go forward we must let go of the past. This sounds simple, but it is difficult, at least it has been for me. Even when I know the past I'm holding to has little value. It is hard to put off the old life and continue to put on the new life which God has for us.

The only way forward is to forget the past. This is one reason why I purposely try not to be sentimental about the past. I don't look at old pictures much. I don't keep much of a journal. My journals usually just contain how-to instructions on how to fix things or some kind of tool which I may need again in the future.

I forget past failures but try to remember the lessons I learned from those failures. I forget my past successes in case I get proud. I forget failures, I forget successes. Instead, I focus my heart on the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I didn't realize I was struggling with regret until one day I found myself spending a lot of time imagining what I would have done different in my life if I had known as a young man what I know now. What would I do different? This is a pointless exercise. It is futile and vain to fantasize about the past. It creates inner turmoil and frustration. It shows a lack of faith in God's providence over the details of my life. I should believe the scripture which says that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him. (**Romans 8:28**).

I want to press forward and not look back. Jesus said if we put our hand to the plow and look back it makes us unfit for God's kingdom. So I don't want to look back. Remember Lot's wife. She looked back and became a pillar of salt. I want to keep my eyes forward, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of my faith.

Philippians 3:15-21

Our "vile" body is the one we're living in right now. It needs food, it needs water, it needs sleep, it needs clothes, it needs all kind of things. This vile body is just a temporary container for our spirit. However, the Lord will give us a new body one day. It is a glorious body. It is a resurrection body which will never die.

Our minds are focused on heaven and we look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Holy Spirit lives in you then you should be thinking about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have no doubt the Holy Spirit is speaking to Christians today about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul gave us a description of people who stood in contrast to the born again Christian. He said these people have another god and that god is their "belly". What did he mean by this? The word belly points to food, and food points to provision. This is a picture of a man whose mind is obsessed with his own provision. His thoughts are completely controlled by making money and living the good life right now. He is not thinking of heavenly things. His mind is fixed on earthly things.

Paul warned us of this kind of people because they are in the church. Some of them have big names and are famous and have mega churches. Paul warned us about these people. He said to "mark them". That means we need to know these impostors by name and avoid them. We need to tell other people to stay away from these wolves in sheep's clothing.

When Paul said be "*followers together of me*" this did not mean he wanted a personal following. Paul warned against following men in **1 Corinthians 1:12-13**. He warned us not to be followers of men. He did not change his mind when he told people to follow him. Instead, he told people to look at the example of his life. How did Paul live? We are to imitate that lifestyle of having our mind set on eternity. Our hearts are to be set on what is eternal, and not on what is temporary. (Compare this thought to **2 Corinthians 4:18**). Paul taught us to walk by faith, not by sight. The things that are "seen" are temporary. Our hearts and minds need to be fixed on what is eternal. This doctrine is completely opposite of what popular preachers in America teach.

Mark those false preachers. Do not listen to them or pay them any attention. As the scripture says, Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Amen. (**2 Corinthians 6:17**)

Philippians Chapter 4

Philippians 4:1-3

The book of life is mentioned throughout the Bible. Another verse where we have the book of life is **Revelation 20:15**, "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

I think if a man read something like this his first thought would be: "**How do I get my name in the book of life?**" That's the question I would ask. That is the question any sane person would be asking.

It is simple to be saved. **Romans 10:13** says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" The gospel is straight forward and easy to understand. Christ died for our sins on the cross at Calvary, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again three days later. He paid the price for our sins. Now if we believe in him and call on his name God will forgive our sins for the sake of his son Jesus Christ. Our names are written in the book of life when we put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save us.

Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**. God demonstrated his grace to us by allowing his son to take our place at Calvary. Because Jesus died, was buried, and rose again we know God accepted his sacrifice on our behalf. Now, we no longer have to go to hell when we die. Instead, we can be forgiven of our sins and have our name written down in the book of life.

Paul was promoting Christian unity. These sisters in the Lord had a disagreement. However, these were workers with Paul in the gospel and he cared about them. He wanted to see them agree together in the Lord. As Christians our agreement is always in the Lord. Outside of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no real basis for agreement. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (**John 14:6**)

How can two walk together except they agree? Their agreement is in the Lord. Once they turn away from their opinions and put emphasis on the Lord then relationships are restored. John put it this way in **1 John 1:7**, "*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"

Philippians 4:4-7

I've mentioned this before but I don't think "*rejoice*" is the same thing as happiness. Happiness depends on circumstances. This "rejoice" Paul wrote about did not depend on external circumstances. It came from inside the believer. It came out of the spirit of the believer and could be relied on no matter how difficult circumstances might be. This rejoicing comes from a clean conscience and from the testimony of a man who knows he is obeying God's voice and doing what God wants him to do.

The Lord is near. He observes, sees, and hears. He speaks to us. Our relationships with people around us should reflect this knowledge. We should live in such a way that people will know we believe in the Lord Jesus. When people are around you they can feel the difference.

Another word for "*moderation*" is gentleness. Christians should be known for having a gentle and a kind demeanor. (2 Timothy 2:24). Our lives should attract people to the gospel of Jesus Christ and not drive people away. The Lord is at hand means the Lord is near. It also means that the return of the Lord is near.

Christians need to overcome anxiety. We are instructed: "*do not be anxious about anything*". How do we overcome anxiety? The Lord wants us to pray about everything. Do not worry about anything but pray about everything. By training yourself to pray about what you would worry about you will learn the Lord can handle things that you cannot. Anxiety arises because there are so many things in life which are out of our control. However, we need to learn to be quiet in God's love and care. We need to remember the Lord sees, he hears, and will act on our behalf. Pray instead of worry. Pray instead of allowing yourself to be anxious. The Lord Jesus taught this in Matthew 6.

When we pray express thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving drives out complaining and murmuring. Complaining and murmuring leads to sin. Discipline yourself to give thanks in everything. Giving thanks is God's will for the Christian. (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 5:20)

When we pray and petition God with thanksgiving we open our heart to receive peace which can only come from God. This peace from God will guard our heart and our mind and protect us from the attack of the enemy.

Philippians 4:8-9

The word 'finally' shows Paul was wrapping up his thoughts. He exhorted them to focus their mind on what was true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and good report. He encouraged them to look for virtue, and things which were praiseworthy. We are instructed to "*think on these things*".

Christians need to learn their real work is believing God's word. In order to believe we must hear (or read), and remember. How can we remember if we do not think. We have to think and meditate, ponder and ruminate. The word must find a place in our mind so that after we close the book we remember what we read. How many times have we walked out of church and had no clue what the preacher said? That should give us an indication of how much we love the truth. How much do you love the truth? How much do you love God's word?

If you love the truth and you love God's word you will remember it. It will find a place in your heart. You will hear it, receive it, believe in it, and find yourself putting it into practice in your everyday life situations.

We must think about the truth and apply it just like the apostle applied the word to his life. He said they could look at his life and see an example of someone putting into practice the truth he preached to them.

The promise was that if we put God's word into practice then we would experience the blessing of God's peace on us. This was a promise for obedience. We will experience God's peace. The God of peace will be with us.

There is a lot around us that reeks of death, and sin, and corruption. It takes a concentrated effort to set our mind on things which are true, honest, lovely, good report, virtue, and praise. It will take effort. It will require sitting still with your Bible in your lap and thinking about the words written on the page. It will require praying and asking God to show you how his word applies to your life. It will require a desire on your part to obey what you read and understand. God will help you if you step out in faith and obedience.

Philippians 4:10-23

In this final section Paul rejoiced that the Philippians were helping him again with material support. He acknowledged that he knew they would have helped previously but were unable to do so. He also said that though they were now helping him he had learned to do without material support. He had learned to be content when he had little or when he had a lot.

Since they were supporting the gospel he was confident that God would supply all of their needs. This points back to what the Lord Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**. Seek God's kingdom and his righteousness. All your needs will be taken care of. We serve the Lord and he promised to provide for us. This is an iron-clad promise in scripture that we need to be clear on. God is our provider. He will provide. He does provide. He will take care of us.

Make up your mind to obey God and seek his kingdom. Help others promote the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Epistle to the Colossians

Colossians Chapter 1

Colossians 1:1-8

Paul mentioned his co-worker in Christ. Epaphras was a minister at the church in Colossae. He brought Paul word about the church. He described the fruit of the Spirit in Colossians. Paul was encouraged to hear the good news about the Colossians. I'm not sure if Paul had a part in starting the Colossian church, but he prayed for them. He thanked God for them.

Thanksgiving for God's people is a continual exercise for all Christians. We should give thanks for God's people and pray for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. Paul thanked God for them.

Notice the emphasis Paul put on the hope of heaven. It is sadly a characteristic of the American church that men put emphasis on the here and now. We don't hear about heaven too much anymore. The apostles and the Lord Jesus focused completely on what is eternal. Their message was always about preparing for eternity. Jesus taught us to live now in preparation for eternity.

Jesus taught us to store our treasures in heaven. Why then do mega churches preach about storing up treasure on earth? It is because we are in a time of apostasy. Most of what is proclaimed from mega churches is a false gospel. Jesus warned us not to be deceived by false prophets and false Christs. Paul warned us in the last days there would be men preaching another Jesus, another gospel, and another Spirit.

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has been preached in all the world. Jesus said it would, and so it happened. Everywhere the message of Jesus Christ is preached there is spiritual fruit. People turn from living for self and the world and they turn to living for God and his kingdom. There is spiritual fruit when the gospel is preached to people.

Be diligent to keep the gospel in your heart every day. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** and remember that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Colossians 1:9-11

In **1 Thessalonians 5:17** Paul commanded the believers to pray without ceasing. In this letter we see Paul followed this exhortation and prayed without ceasing for the Colossians.

Unceasing prayer is not necessarily 24 hours a day, but an ongoing, daily habit of prayer. I can see where we should maintain an attitude of prayer and be ready anytime to lift up a prayer to God like Nehemiah.

He prayed for them to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. He prayed for them to have all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

There is more to being a Christian than the moment you bowed your head and prayed a sinner's prayer. We must continue in this relationship with the Lord to understand his will.

James exhorted us to pray for wisdom. If we do not understand then we can ask God for wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Why do we need to know more of God's will and have God's wisdom and spiritual understanding? There is a process of being renewed in the mind. When we are first saved our mind is still controlled by everything we grew up with in this world system. Our minds are programmed by the world system. Now we must allow our thinking to be corrected. We must allow the Lord to change the way we see life.

God's priorities are vastly different than our priorities. We cannot understand how God sees things unless God teaches us. This is what Paul was praying for. He was praying they would open their heart

to learn from God and have their thinking changed. They had to put off the old way of thinking and learn to think in spiritual truth.

It takes time. It takes suffering. There is no way around it. Learning to think biblically takes more than reading the Bible. It will take a willing heart to be corrected and chastised. It will require humbling ourselves. It will require us to allow the Holy Spirit to search every thought we think, and be willing to allow the Lord to cast down our vain imaginations and thoughts.

We must aggressively cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this process. We must search the scriptures, meditate on the truth, ask questions, record the answers, and then, and here it is - Don't forget what you learn! Remind yourself of the truth. Repeat it daily. Hold fast the form of sound words. Hold on to what God gives you. Don't let it go.

The purpose of having the mind transformed is so our lives will honor God. We learn to live in a way that is pleasing to God. We learn to honor God with our words, attitudes, and actions. We learn how to obey the Holy Spirit.

As we do this our lives will bear fruit. Our lives will produce a fragrance that comes from another world. People will feel God's kingdom when they get around us.

The Holy Spirit gives his strength to our spirit. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to endure. We are called to do more than endure. We are called to patiently endure. We are called to patiently endure with joyfulness. This is not possible in human strength or determination. This is only possible by being filled everyday with the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:12-14

There is a lot the Holy Spirit revealed in these verses. The Holy Spirit showed us what the Lord Jesus did for us through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord made us partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. What does this mean? It means the Lord has plans for us in eternity. There is an inheritance. For me, the Lord himself is my inheritance. I want to be with the Lord. If you read the history of the Levites the priests it is written that the Lord was their inheritance in contrast to the land inheritance which the other tribes received. The Lord himself became the inheritance of the Levites and the priests.

An inheritance is important for us to think about. The Lord exhorted in **Revelation 3:11** to hold fast what we have so that "*no man may take your crown*". That crown represents some kind of inheritance. We are to be careful about this and "hold fast". We see there is a distinction made between salvation and "*inheritance*". We must hold fast to what God gave us in order to receive inheritance. This is not a works-based salvation theology. This has to do with the judgment seat of Christ when believers receive a reward for the things done in the body, whether good or bad. This is a matter of receiving rewards or losing rewards. The Lord wants us to receive the reward he has for us. He exhorts us to "*hold fast*".

The Lord Jesus delivered us from the powers of darkness. Demons, devils, evil spirits, and Satan are real enemies. The Lord delivered us from their kingdom and power. When he did this he translated us into his kingdom. These two kingdoms are opposed to one another. There is no truce and there is never negotiation. There is never a ceasefire. This is a battle that has been going on for a long time but it will

not last forever. There will be a decisive end to this battle in the future. The enemy of God will lose the battle and all those who follow him will lose.

The Lord redeemed us from sin and the enemy through his blood shed at Calvary. The Lord Jesus gave himself to redeem us. Redemption means buying something back. We were redeemed through the shed blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the price for our sins. We now belong completely to him and no longer owe anything to the enemy. The accusations of the devil no longer have power over those who believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:13).

Colossians 1:15-19

Jesus told his disciples if they saw him they saw the Father. Jesus is the exact image of the invisible God. When we look at Jesus we are looking at God. Jesus Christ is God. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He is the image of the invisible God. If God were to look in a mirror he would see Jesus Christ.

Jesus is called the "*firstborn*" which means he is before all things. This means he was the first man of a new race of men. This race of men receive a resurrected body like the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus calls them his brothers. He is the firstborn of many brothers. The brothers are not little gods. They are like him. They are not him. They are like him. Jesus calls them his brothers not because they are gods but because they resemble him.

Man was made in the image of God but man fell into sin. Jesus has redeemed us from the fall of man and brought us back to the heavenly Father. When we put our faith in Jesus we are born again and become like Jesus.

It is by the Lord Jesus Christ the world was created. He is God's word. By him the world was created. The world was created for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is before all things that were ever created. Therefore, Jesus Christ is God. He was with God in the beginning, and he is himself God.

The entire universe is held together by the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that is created is held together and consists because the Lord Jesus Christ lives.

Jesus is also the head of the body which is the church. He is the beginning, the head, and the firstborn.

There is a word for what we are describing. This word is "*preeminence*". He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily and he is over all things.

Why did Paul teach this? Because people try to drag Jesus down to their level. They try to make Jesus just another moral teacher or prophet or some kind of guru. However, Paul was clearly teaching us that Jesus Christ is greater than any man who ever lived. There is no other man who ever lived like Jesus. He is the alpha and the omega, and he is the beginning and the end of mankind.

Colossians 1:20-22

Men are enemies of God because of wicked works. Men are sinners and as a result become enemies of God. However, it is God's plan for men to be reconciled. God accomplished this reconciliation through his Son Jesus Christ going to the cross and shedding his blood and dying. The Lord Jesus Christ bore the full penalty of our sins. Now, as a result of his substitution on our behalf, we can receive forgiveness of sins. God will wipe out all the sin that is against us because of the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This reconciliation brings peace with God. God made peace with us by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The work of Christ allowed God to present us to himself as holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight.

This is good news. This is the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Through faith in the gospel we have peace with God. The Lord did all of the work of salvation for us. It is our part to believe what God said and trust in what God did for us.

Trusting in God touches everything in life. It is not only the forgiveness of sins, but without this foundation we could go no further. The problem of sin must be dealt with in every person's life. There is no way to get around this. Jesus is the only way we can approach God and have our sins forgiven, removed, and dealt with.

Colossians 1:23-25

There is no other gospel that can save. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which Paul preached is the only saving gospel. Any other message will lead men away from God instead of toward God. There is no hope of salvation outside the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Paul said we must continue in the faith and be completely grounded in the gospel. We must be completely settled in our faith in the gospel. There is no other way that men can find forgiveness of their sins and reconciliation with God. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).

Did Paul's sufferings add something to the gospel that was lacking? When Paul talked about his suffering he pointed to the fact that in order for him to preach the gospel he had to suffer. In order to reach people he had to deny himself. He could not live any way that his flesh wanted to live. Instead, he had to deny himself in order to obey God and the calling upon his life to preach the gospel. It is just a plain matter of fact statement that in order to preach the gospel Paul went through suffering. Anyone today who lives godly and preaches the gospel will suffer. Why? Because we live in a fallen world and there is a world system against us preaching the gospel. Jesus said in this world we will have tribulation but he overcame the world. Because Jesus overcame we also overcome by faith in him.

Paul suffered for the church which is the body of Christ. He suffered for the church because he was persecuted for preaching. He suffered from unbelievers, from religious people, and from false brethren in the church. His suffering was a result of preaching the gospel truthfully and with a clear conscience before God. All of God's prophets suffered and most died for their message and testimony.

In all his suffering Paul rejoiced. How can we rejoice while we suffer? If we suffer as a Christian we have a lot to be happy about. If we suffer as a Christian then God is happy with us.

Peter pointed this out in **1 Peter 2:19-21**, *"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"*

Colossians Chapter 2

Colossians 2:1-3

What was this *"great conflict"* Paul talked about? Paul was in a spiritual battle for their souls. His battle was done through prayer, the word, and by communicating the truth in love to the church.

We are in a great conflict whether or not we realize it. There is a battle between the truth and the lie happening in the mind of every person in our family, coworkers, church, and in our nation. There is a conflict happening between the Lord Jesus and the enemy right now. The enemy tries to defeat the Lord by repeating lies to people through word of mouth, media, and broadcasting by air. In many ways the enemy has perfected the publishing of lies. At the same time the Lord works through the lives, prayers, and witness of believers. Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We engage the world on the basis of who we are: salt and light. We do not engage the world system on its terms of pride, lust, covetousness, and unbelief.

The Christians Paul wrote had never met Paul. They had not seen his face in the flesh. But he was in a great conflict on their behalf. This is spiritual warfare.

Paul's prayer was for their complete understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to know who they were in Christ. His prayer was that their understanding would be complete and that they would be comforted by the truth. He prayed that their lives would be tied together with other Christians in the truth. When Christians walk in agreement with the gospel they are knit together. How can two walk together except they be agreed? When we agree with the gospel then we walk together. As we walk together our lives are mixed and we become united in the Lord.

There is no wisdom outside the Lord Jesus. Man's pride leads him in different directions to obtain knowledge to fill the spiritual void inside him. There is only one source to find wisdom that will satisfy. This is in the man Christ Jesus. He is the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge. He is everything we need.

Man was created to need the Lord. Our spirit craves God, but men don't know this. They spend their lives pursuing everything but the one thing they truly need. Men only need one thing. The Lord Jesus Christ.

How can I be saved? Believe the gospel! Jesus Christ died for our sins at Calvary, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**). Whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. (**Romans 10:13**).

Colossians 2:4-8

We see Paul's concern for these Christians. He was afraid that it was possible for someone to "beguile" them with enticing words. Therefore he said "beware" lest any man spoil them through "philosophy" and "vain deceit". This philosophy and vain deceit he warned about are "after the tradition of men", and "after the rudiments of the world".

There is a lot packed in these verses. It is possible for Christians who believe in the Lord to get sidetracked by the enemy. It is possible for us to be deceived by men who appear to know what they are talking about. This coincides with what Peter said in **2 Peter 2** when he told the Christians that as there were false prophets who deceived people there shall be false teachers who will deceive Christians. How is this possible? These false teachers are fake Christians. They do not follow the gospel, but instead they follow "philosophy", "vain deceit", "traditions of men", and the "rudiments of the world".

There is a lot for the Christian to avoid. Worldly philosophy is man's attempt at understanding truth and understanding God. It is based on man's understanding of the world around him, and it is not based on divine revelation which the Holy Spirit gives. It is attractive and seductive and I have had close Christian friends who were led astray by philosophy and the rudiments of the world.

What are the rudiments of the world? How does the world think? The Bible shows us how the world operates in **1 John 2**. The world system is based on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Civilization revolves around prideful men who make a name for themselves, who then gain a following. They believe by this method they ensure themselves influence and power. These men rise up to lead other men through the use of carnal power or seduce men with covetousness. This is exactly how government, business, and society operate. This is the world system. When Christians adopt this attitude within the church then you have what Paul warned of as "philosophy", "vain deceit", "traditions of men", and "rudiments of the world".

The real danger is not out there among unbelievers. The real danger is men within the church who base religion, ministry, and church life on the same principles as the world. This is what we should fear the most. These are false teachers who lead men into heresy and bring up swift destruction.

How can I be delivered from this deception? Stick to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be a follower of men. Study the Bible for yourself. Obey the word of God. Put it into practice. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone and do not put your faith in anyone or anything else besides the word of God.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:13**).

Colossians 2:9-12

Jesus Christ is God. In him is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Jesus often said that when we look at him we are looking at the Father. What does this mean? Jesus is God. The Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God. God is three persons in one God. The greatest revelation of God that man ever received

was in the man Jesus Christ. Jesus was completely man and completely God. He is human and God. This is difficult to understand but it is true. We must accept by faith the revelation of God. He revealed himself to us so we can understand what He wants us to. He loves us. He loves us so much he died on the cross for us so we can be forgiven and reconciled to him.

God made man in his own image. He is intent on saving us. He will always do all that he can do to bring us back to himself.

We are complete in Christ. Everything we need for spiritual and physical life is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our past and future and present is all wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our past is forgiven, our future is secured, and our present is provided and protected for by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our provision and he is the goal of life. Any other provision, protection, or portion will leave us empty, hungry, open to attack, and off track with how God created the universe.

Paul used words like "circumcision" and "baptism". The religious Jew of his day understood these words better than we do today. Our takeaway from these verses is that the Lord Jesus replaced man-made religion. Jesus has a personal relationship with us as individuals. He also has a relationship with us in corporate fellowship in the church. What is the church? Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus he is there. We are the church when we gather in his name and exhort one another in scripture, and worship, and pray, and break bread together.

God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He has also raised us up in Christ Jesus. He gave us spiritual life now and forever. Our mortal, frail body will some day be swallowed up by the eternal life we already have in our hearts. Amen.

Colossians 2:13-15

The heart of what Paul was describing here was some of the things which the Lord Jesus accomplished through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Man's position before God saved him was "dead in sins". He lived according to his intellect and did what his carnal nature told him to do. However, when we believe the gospel then God placed us into the Lord Jesus. What happened to the Lord Jesus was accounted to us as well. This goes beyond accounting, however, and is a spiritual reality we can experience in our daily lives as we abide in the truth.

Notice when Christ was raised from the dead we were also made alive. We were dead in sins but now when we put faith in Jesus we are made spiritually alive. We are given eternal life. We have spiritual life when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "quickened" means to make someone alive, or to raise someone from the dead.

When we are made alive we also automatically receive forgiveness of sins. Sin is related to spiritual death. If we are born again then sin no longer has dominion over us. We are no longer under the power of sin but we are now under the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ now lives in our heart, in our spirit, and we are alive in him. This life of Jesus drives out all sin. Our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb shed on the cross of Calvary.

The ordinances which were blotted out were the religious rules the nation of Israel lived by. All the sacrificial, ceremonial, moral and religious laws in Israel pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that we have the Lord Jesus living in our hearts there is no need for this outward, religious tradition any longer. Those who live according to the religious traditions of men do not live by the spiritual reality of the living Christ in their hearts. Dead religion has to do with men who accommodate the Bible but still live according to the principles of the world. When men only know about Jesus or just facts about Jesus they live according to laws, rules, tradition, and outward religion. Their churches are built and maintained along the same principles on which the world system exists.

But when Jesus died on Calvary he set us free from ordinances of religion. He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us. All dead religion is against men. If you are ever in a church controlled by dead religion you will know it if the Holy Spirit lives in you.

The Lord Jesus is for us. This is why he died for us. He came to save us from ourselves. He came to show us the reality of God in truth and not by using the shadows of outward religion. He himself is the express image of God. If you have Jesus you don't need religious traditions and ordinances any longer. You have been set free from every religious and worldly system so you can serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The final thing these verses point to is the reality that what Jesus did at Calvary completely defeated the powers of darkness. I don't pretend to understand all the ways in which this happened. It is true nonetheless. When the Lord Jesus died on Calvary he destroyed the power of the devil. He put the devil to an open shame.

We have the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have eternal life, our sins are forgiven, we are set free from religion, and have the authority in the name of Jesus Christ to defeat the power of the devil when he attacks us. Scripture plainly says for us to submit to God and resist the devil and the devil must flee from us. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Amen.

Colossians 2:16-23

Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees which was religious hypocrisy. This is the same exhortation we have from Paul here. Paul warned Christians to not be deceived by men who promote religious traditions, rituals, or esoteric spiritual knowledge. Paul said that those who promote religious elitism are vainly puffed by their fleshly minds. They do not have spiritual minds, even though they talk about the Bible and sound authoritative with their aggressive personalities.

Men judge you if you claim to love God but do not follow their prescribed religious traditions. Paul gave an example of "*meat, or in drink, or respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of sabbath days*". Right there you have most of the deception in false religion. Religious deceivers always emphasize what you can or cannot eat and they will emphasize certain days for worshipping or honoring God. These men preach a false gospel and another Christ.

The traditions in Israel were shadows which pointed to the reality of Christ Jesus our Lord. He is the fulfillment of the ten commandments, the sacrificial system, the sabbath celebrations, everything!! Men

who attempt to reintroduce any of those religious system again into the Christian church are false teachers, deceivers, and are promoting another gospel, another Christ, and another spirit.

Notice another problem people have is with angels. Religious deceivers promote angel worship, or put a lot of emphasis on angels. Listen closely to someone who is teaching. Do they talk about angels a lot? Do they describe having personal experiences with angels? Of course it is possible and probable that men will have encounters with angels but the scripture says "*angels unaware..*". In other words, if a man truly had an experience with an angel he would probably be unaware the person was an angel. I can only think of a few times in the Bible where men had direct confrontations with angels and knew they were angels, and these were all at very pivotal and watershed moments in the history of the human race. False teachers will always add a lot of the supernatural to their "testimony" in order to convince people they know what they are talking about and get people to follow them.

Beware of deceivers who bring another gospel than the one Paul preached. The gospel Paul preached is outlined for us in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (**Romans 10:13**)

Colossians Chapter 3

Colossians 3:1-4

What does it mean to be risen with Christ?

The natural mind has difficulty understanding this but we can grasp it by faith. This is spiritual truth. When we believe the gospel God places us into his Son Jesus. This means when Jesus died on the cross we died with him and in him on the cross. When he was buried we were buried with him and in him. When Jesus rose from the dead on the third day we rose with him and in him. These are spiritual facts. The Bible clearly shows us this is the truth. This is the only way we can make sense of Paul's words "if ye then be risen with Christ".

If we believe in the Lord Jesus and the gospel then God places us in Christ and when Christ arose we were risen with Christ. We rose from the dead with Christ. How does this affect us in the present? It means our spirit inside us is alive. Our body is dying because of sin but our spirit is alive and will live forever with God. From God's viewpoint we are already with him because God does not experience time like we do. He sees everything from the beginning to the end in eternity. With God there is no past, present, and future but there is only the eternal now.

What is true? The only true things are those which will continue to exist after this temporary existence is done away with. What is true? Truth is only what God says is true and not what I say is true or what I think is true. The only time I say or speak anything true is when I say what God says and when I agree with what God says.

Christ is at the right hand of God. He sits at the right hand of the Father. As Christians we live for the eternal. We do not dedicate our energy to the temporary life in this body. Instead we dedicate ourselves to what is eternal and what will last forever. The highest priority for us now is God's word and the souls of men. There is no higher goal in life here on this earth.

We are dead and our life is hid with God. How do we make sense of this? Paul is speaking in the present tense! How can I at this moment, right now, be dead? This body is dead. It died with Jesus on the cross. I cannot enter the eternal with this dead body. God will one day resurrect this dead body but it will be completely changed and made into a new body which will live forever. But right now I am dead. My existence in this body is temporary but my spirit will live forever with the Lord. My real life is currently hidden from me because it is with God. But one day I will see that real life which I have with God.

When will I see my real life? It will appear when Jesus Christ comes back. This is why the return of Jesus Christ should be the highest and most passionate desire for any Christian. When Jesus returns we will get a new body like his body. We will be changed and our mortal body will be swallowed up by the life of an eternal body. Hallelujah!

Colossians 3:5-10

Paul listed attitudes and sinful actions to remove completely from our life. I've heard people say they do not preach the message of "don't drink, don't smoke", but it appears this is exactly the kind of message Paul was preaching here. There is definitely a time when preachers need to tell people what to stop doing and what to start doing. We need to correct one another. We need to help others to quit behavior which does not line up with the life of a Christian. Some people need to be taught to quit being covetous, greedy, and sexual immoral.

Notice Paul talked about the wrath of God coming on people. The people he pinpointed were called "children of disobedience". Who are these people? It is not difficult to figure this out. Children of disobedience are those who do not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. There might be religious people in this category but they do not have a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. How can you tell if a person is a real Christian? Jesus said we can know people by the fruit in their lives. Simple and direct but this is too much for some people to understand.

Do not live like the people upon whom the wrath of God abides. Why do we want to live like the world? People make up excuses so they can live like the world. They pretend that they live like the world in order to win the world. They do not realize that the only way an unbeliever can know who a Christian is is for the Christian to live a different life. People are not inspired to become a Christian because of worldly, sentimental, or emotional love. What brings people to salvation? It is seeing something radically different in Christians and then being convicted in their conscience. A true Christian really does live a different kind of lifestyle. He does not live like an unbeliever. He does not engage in the same kind of behavior, he does not say the same things, he does not tell the same jokes, and he does not hang out at the same places as the unbeliever. He does not have an intimate, emotional relationship with an unbeliever.

Scripture which helps confirm what I am saying: Read **Ephesians 5:6-11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18**.

Once we put off the old man then we must put on the new man. The new man is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to do this we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. There will be no success in putting on the new man if we are not filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the new man and we must be filled with the Holy Spirit on a consistent basis. Pray and ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit. He promised that he would answer this prayer.

The new man is completely different from the old man. To get a picture of what the new man looks like read the fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**.

Colossians 3:11-15

In the church we are not defined by culture or ethnic or religious background or heritage. Men are defined by the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian is "in" Christ so he can no longer define himself by worldly categories such as race, culture, or language. In Christ Jesus we become one people of God.

Act in accordance with this fact by showing love, kindness, humility, mercy, and patience toward brothers and sisters in Christ. Forgive people in the same way Christ forgave us. God forgives us unconditionally because of what the Lord Jesus did for us at Calvary. We are not above the Lord Jesus. We are his servants. Follow his example and forgive others. Love people unconditionally and with no strings attached. Love binds us all together perfectly.

Let God's peace rule in our heart. We are the one body of Jesus Christ. Let us be thankful.

These are important scriptures to meditate upon, memorize, and put into practice in our relationships with other Christians.

Colossians 3:16-17

It is important as Christians to have God's word in our heart. This means taking time to read, study, memorize, and meditate on scripture.

When the Lord Jesus defeated Satan's temptations he did so by quoting from scriptures. Therefore we can learn that in order for us to overcome temptation we must have God's word in memory.

This was never more real to me than when I was a young Christian. Every day I stood on God's promises in his word to make it through a Christian rehab program. Some important verses that helped me at that time in my life were **Philippians 4:13, Philippians 1:6, James 4:7, and 1 Corinthians 10:13**.

These are just a few verses which I learned in the first months I was saved. Just these verses, quoted to myself or out loud, enabled me to endure an experience which was harder than going through Army boot camp.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Colossians 3:18-25

The Bible shows us how each member of a family is to live with one another. God has a design and an order for the family, and when we live according to God's plan and order then we will all be the happiest we could possibly be. God loves us and he knows what is best for us. He gives us his word and these verses are plain to understand. If we live according to what these verses tell us then we will have a godly family filled with the joy of the Lord.

Notice in verse 23 that whatever we do we should do it with all of our heart as working for the Lord and not for men. This is a Bible verse I learned when I was first saved. It means that as a Christian the quality of my life and work should always be my best. I am working for the Lord and not just men. I regret that I have not always applied this to my life. There were times when I worked just for men and my quality of work showed it.

There is no respect of persons with God. There is no favoritism. God will be fair to every person. Christians will have their works examined by the Lord. The Lord will inspect our life's work. We are not saved by doing good works but good works show we are saved. Let us work every day like we believe God is watching because he really is watching us.

Colossians Chapter 4

Colossians 4:1-4

The first verse seems to go with the previous chapter when discussing relationships in the family and work relationships.

Moving on to verse 2 there is an emphasis on prayer. Praying and giving thanks go together. Our prayers should always be filled with thanksgiving to God for his blessings and for his control over our lives. To continue in prayer means to make it a life practice to daily find the time to pray and talk to the Lord. It points to a life of regular devotions in prayer, in reading God's word, and in praising the Lord.

Paul requested prayers for himself that he would have opportunities to preach the gospel. He knew he was a prisoner because he was a preacher and so as a prisoner he hoped for the chance to preach. He asked for prayer so that he would be effective in his preaching.

Praying and preaching go together. Intercession and proclamation go hand in hand. The work of the priest and the work of the prophet work together to bring people the saving knowledge of King Jesus.

Colossians 4:5-6

Who were those "without"? The obvious answer was those outside the house of faith. Paul said to be wise with unbelievers. He added "redeeming the time". Paul taught Christians to take advantage of opportunities to share our faith with unbelievers.

Our speech should be with grace and seasoned with salt. This reminds me of what Jesus said. He said we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Our lives are in contrast with the world around us. The world system and the people who follow the spirit of this world system are passing away. Christians, however, follow the Holy Spirit and will inherit a kingdom which will never pass away. Our lives are built on an eternal foundation. How should this affect the way we live and how we speak?

I'm convinced one of the main reasons people are angry, petty, and selfish is because they know time is running out. They are afraid of death and are attempting to extract as much "living" from every moment they possibly can. Unbelievers almost believe it is an obligation to live as selfishly as possible and experience as much of the world as they can while alive. They have no hope for life beyond the grave. They are therefore in bondage and slaves to self-worship because of the fear and certainty that their "time" is running out.

Christians can be selfless and lay down their lives because they know they will live forever. Therefore our conversation is not filled with pettiness, wrath, anger, cursing, deceit, malice, or lying. We don't have to pretend anything. We are straightforward, wholehearted, and sincere in our life and our speech. This makes a deep impression on unbelievers, as it should.

Redeeming the time means we use our time for the purpose of promoting the gospel so others can be saved. We are not afraid of losing "our" time, but we are concerned that we use the time we have to glorify God by being a living testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 4:7-18

These final verses remind me of how important people are. The church is people. Paul knew a lot of people by name, where they were, where they were going, where they came from, and what they were doing. He was like a people coordinator in the early church. I think this is a picture of what the Lord Jesus said about his disciples: *"The world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another."*

It is evident Paul loved these people. He invested in them, not only the gospel, but his own soul as well. He poured out his life for them. This is the example set before us as Christians.

Are we willing to lay down our lives for the brethren? Are we willing to be humble and wash the feet of the saints? Are we willing to sit down and break bread and commune with brothers and sisters in Christ?

Verse 17 stands out to me. Take the ministry you have received from the Lord and fulfill it! The only way we can do this is by staying in God's word and staying in prayer. There is no other way to be filled with the Spirit and fulfill our ministry. We must stay close to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

When Paul wrote this letter he included the names of his coworkers. This is always an important point with me because it underlines the importance of working with others. Especially in the church and in the gospel it is necessary for Christians to work together. Jesus said the world will know we are his disciples by our love for one another. We see in these verses an example of Christian love in action as Paul included his brothers in this greeting to the Thessalonians.

This church in Thessalonica is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God is three in one. There are people who attack the truth that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But this is the true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Any other god men create is a false god. God was, and is, and will always be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If we reject this then we will reject that Jesus is God and man. If we reject he is God then we deny the incarnation and his sinless nature is in question. If Jesus had any sin he could not be the perfect Lamb sacrificed for us. Also, if he was not completely a man he

could not stand in our place on the cross. He must be fully God and fully man for us to be saved and receive forgiveness of our sins.

Since Jesus is God and the Bible makes it clear that God the Father is God then how can we deny God is more than one person? He is three persons in one God. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Rejection of this is rejection of the gospel, and rejection of the gospel means a man cannot be saved or have his sins forgiven.

Everything depends on who God is. God's provision of salvation is himself. If we deny who God is then we deny the only way we can be saved and forgiven. We must know God in truth. We must know God as he is.

We cannot understand the trinity but we can believe what God revealed about himself. We can take God at his word and trust in him that he revealed the truth about himself. This truth is in his Son Jesus Christ. Everything we know about God is revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's word to us.

Paul gave thanks for the Thessalonians. He thanked God for their faith, their love, and their patience. Paul gave thanks for them in his prayers. This is an example of praying for the church which we should follow. We should remember to pray for God's people. We should remember to pray for the church, and give thanks for the love, faith, and patience of God's people.

We can know we are the elect of God. How can we know this? Because we have believed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**) Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

Paul preached the gospel to the Thessalonians and when they heard it they knew it was not a man-made message. It did not come to them as philosophy or religion but it came with the power of the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. Paul not only convinced them of the gospel by his words but his life backed it up. The way he lived showed the truth of the gospel to them. These new Christians followed Paul's way of life and his example. When they heard and received the gospel it brought with hardship and trouble. Jesus promised this. He said in this world we would have tribulation but be of good cheer because he overcame the world.

The church in Thessalonica was an example of faith under fire. They endured with faith and love. Other Christians were inspired by them. Paul used this church as an example to other churches.

Many times the word of God will bring affliction into our lives, but it will also bring much joy in the Holy Spirit. There is a spiritual joy in following the Lord Jesus that the world knows nothing about. It is the joy of having a clean conscience and knowing you are in God's will. It is the joy of knowing your sins are forgiven and you are on your way to heaven. It is the joy that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus took our place at Calvary. He died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. In the same way that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead we also will be resurrected one day. We will be changed into our immortal bodies and will live with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

The church of the Thessalonians was an example to other churches in Macedonia and Achaia. In what ways was their faith expressed and proclaimed? They turned to the true God from idols. They embraced the teaching that Jesus would return from heaven and deliver us from the wrath coming on the earth. They believed Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and would return again. This repentance and faith set them apart from other churches.

Each local church has something that will set it apart. Each church has a different testimony of God's grace. This church had the grace to believe the gospel that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and that he would also return again to receive them unto himself so that where he is they may also be.

What sets apart the true church from the false church. In today's world we are surrounded by men preaching a false gospel and creating false churches based on a false gospel. How can we know the true church when we see it? The true church believes the gospel that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and they are waiting expectantly for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

1 Thessalonians 2:1-4

When Paul preached the gospel to the Thessalonians it was not in vain. They believed the word and were saved. They turned away from idol worship to the living God and his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We get some history of Paul's missionary work. He shared how he suffered at Philippi, but even after this persecution he and his co-workers were not afraid to continue to preach the gospel. This should tell us something about his conviction about the message he preached. Our willingness to continue to preach the gospel despite persecution and hardship shows the gospel we preach is the truth.

Paul reminded them that since they suffered for preaching then it demonstrated they did not have bad or selfish motives in their ministry. Their work was not motivated by self-interest.

When they preached the gospel it was not in order to please men but instead to please God. Only men whose hearts are free from self-interest, covetousness, and greed can truly preach the gospel fearlessly and boldly as it should be preached. The more we are interested in ourselves the less truthful our message will be. We may even preach the truth but it will be with little power if our hearts are focused on ourselves.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-8

Why did Paul remind the Thessalonians that he did not use flattering words or a cloak of covetousness? The simple reason was that there were other people who did use flattery and disguised their covetousness as sincerity. People pretend to be sincere when instead they are sharing God's word to provide for their own needs. There are people who teach the Bible simply to make a financial living from it. Paul wanted to put himself completely outside the circle of those who preached the gospel for self-interest or for motives of self-profit. He proved this by suffering and going without. He proved his motivations by working with his hands and supplying his own needs while he preached the gospel.

Being a burden on others was something Paul avoided. Why? He could not be effective in reaching people with the gospel if he was a burden on the people he was trying to reach. It would cause people to doubt his sincerity and motives. Therefore, he tried hard to never be a financial burden on other people.

Paul compared his actions and attitudes as "gentle", and compared this with how a nurse took care of a patient or a mother took care of a young child. It was with tenderness, patience, and understanding.

He not only gave the gospel but he shared his life with them. It is a mistake to only share information, or tracts, or give away Bible, but never give ourselves. We come alongside those we reach with the gospel. We are supposed to walk with them, live with them, share our lives with them. God did not just give us a book, did he? No, he gave us himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should do the same.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Paul and his coworkers labored night and day. Why? Probably because they preached in the day and worked in the night. Or vice versa.

They worked and served in ministry to stop the accusations of those who implied they had wrong motives. The enemy will send people with false accusations against those who work in the ministry. One way Paul was able to defeat these accusations was to prove his sincerity by not allowing this church to support him financially. They could not accuse him of preaching the gospel in order to profit from it financially. This is how much Paul loved the Lord and also loved this church.

At times this same strategy might be necessary so it is wise from any one who works in the ministry to be ready to also work in the world to raise their own support. Most of my life this has been the case. We work to support ourselves and try to be a witness for the Lord where we find ourselves. This seems to be the pattern in my life.

Paul's relationship with them was like a father with his children. He exhorted them to live a life worthy of being a Christian. We need these kind of Christians in our life. We need others to exhort and encourage us in our walk with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

It matters how we respond when we hear the gospel. Some people hear the gospel and treat it like it is a man-made story or something ancient humans created. They receive the gospel as if it were the word of a man. However, the Thessalonians received the gospel as the word of God. They heard the message Paul preached and recognized it was the word of God.

People in the church do this. They have heard so many sermons it no longer impacts them as it should. They listen to preaching as if it is entertainment or stories made up by the man standing in the pulpit. No, the gospel is not from man. It is the word of God.

The word of God has an effect on people, no matter if they believe it or not. For those who believe it has the effect of saving their souls but for those who do not believe it has the effect of hardening their

hearts. I've noticed this when I share the gospel with people. For some it brings them into the light of who God is. For others it drives them further into the darkness of their imagination.

Paul mentioned suffering and persecution as a normal part of the Christian life. It not only came from religious people but also from the world through government. Eventually the religious world and the political world unite against the Lord and against his people. This is the pattern in the Bible.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Here we see Paul's "*glory*" and "*joy*" were Christians. What does this tell us?

Paul pointed to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns he will sit as the judge over every believer and will reward each one. What do you think Christians will be judged for?

Paul gives us a clue. Paul's reward on judgment day was somehow related to the people he brought to Christ.

We see this in the life of Jesus. **Hebrews 12:2**, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

What was the joy which was set before the Lord Jesus when he went to the cross?

The joy of the Lord is the salvation of souls. The joy of the Lord is people who are redeemed from their sins and from the hand of the devil. This is the joy of the Lord.

Now compare this with what Paul says: "*Ye are our glory and joy.*"

Our reward will be people brought to Christ and those we encouraged in Christ. This is our reward. There are only a few things which are eternal. God's word is eternal. The souls of men are eternal.

Paul was hindered in his ministry by Satan. Satan hindered him. We should take note of this. There is a spiritual enemy who opposes every Christian. Never underestimate this. Remember to be vigilant for our adversary is like a lion who prowls around looking for someone to devour.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 3

1 Thessalonians 3:1-4

Paul recognized the danger of afflictions to the faith of the Christian. What was Paul's reply to the attack on the faith of the Christian? His reply was to send people to reassure those who were afflicted that they were appointed to this by God. How was that comforting?

Those who do not believe the gospel can never understand how this brings comfort. But for those who believe the gospel it is comforting to know that God sees us. He knows exactly what our circumstances are. He in fact allowed these afflictions for his own purpose.

The Bible teaches us many possibilities for why Christians suffer afflictions and persecutions. However, we need to realize first of all that God is in control. We need to acknowledge the fact that God is over all. Nothing in our lives will happen without God's permission. Nothing happened in Job's life without God's permission. When we get hold on this we will realize that God is taking us somewhere and that destination cannot be attained without suffering.

The Bible says that even God's own Son Jesus learned obedience through the things which he suffered. Read **Hebrews 5:8**.

When we take up the cross, deny ourselves, and follow Jesus we can expect we will suffer affliction. This is a normal part of the Christian life.

Suffering works for good for a Christian. It is not wasted. For the unbeliever suffering makes them more bitter and causes them to flee into the darkness of their soul. The darkness in the souls of men is a bottomless abyss.

By seeing our circumstances through the eyes of faith in God we move toward holiness, righteousness, purity, and wholeness. The afflictions of this life only work to further sanctify those who trust and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not be damaged by the fire of the furnace but instead will be purified.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-8

Is it possible for the "tempter" to undo the work of the ministry? Apparently this was a fear which Paul had in his ministry. The Thessalonians suffered afflictions and Paul was concerned that these problems would expose them to temptation. What kind of temptation? How would these Christians giving in to temptation cause Paul's labor to be in vain? These are serious questions we should ask ourselves. Paul took this possibility to heart and took action to prevent it. He sent Timothy to make sure they were sound in the faith and unmoved by their afflictions.

Affliction makes us vulnerable to the enemy. The enemy will use every opportunity to destroy our faith in Jesus. When people suffer they are vulnerable to temptation. Paul knew this and we should recognize this in our lives. Suffering, affliction, and difficulty will draw the enemy to attack us. If you are knocked down you can be sure he will show up to kick you in the ribs when you are down. So get up! Don't stay down if at all possible. Be on guard when you go through hard times. You have more to be concerned about than just your afflictions. You also need to make sure you keep your eyes firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus. Abide in the gospel. Remind yourself constantly that God loves you and that Christ died on the cross for you.

Paul's joy in life came from knowing his work in Christ was successful. When he heard they stood firm in their faith in the Lord Jesus he felt relief. His life was wrapped up in the ministry, to see people come to saving faith, and then teaching them to walk in victory in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Paul pushed toward a final goal in verse 13 where he described "*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Paul wanted to make sure they were ready for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't think his exhortation implied that they could lose eternal life. Instead, I think he was concerned about their

meeting the Lord Jesus. We do not want to be ashamed at his return. How is it possible for a Christian to be ashamed when the Lord returns?

We need to give serious thought to the return of the Lord Jesus and how this affects our daily life. The Lord Jesus taught us to watch and pray. We need to be alert so that we do not live like the world. They live in darkness but we are in the light. We need to live like those who are in the light.

Paul wrote: "*unblameable in holiness before God*". This process of becoming holy is accomplished in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to live for God in our own strength. Instead, we rely on the Holy Spirit. We have a choice. We can choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit or continue to live like the world. The world is described as people who live in ignorance and unbelief. They have a hard heart and a continual lust for stimulation. Unbelievers call this "living life".

Paul prayed the Lord would allow him and his coworkers to return to them so he could teach them. He wanted to make sure they were ready for the return of the Lord. He wanted them to be ready for the day of the Lord. This is an issue which should concern every pastor of God's word. What are we doing if we are not getting people ready to meet God? What are we doing? Why are we doing this?

We need revival. We need to put aside doing church as we have in the past and find a new way to gather together and encourage one another in the Lord. May the Lord bless us with revival and a renewed expectation of his return.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 4

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Paul gave commandment from the Lord to live a clean and holy life. What did this mean? In context, this pointed to a life of sexual purity.

This was a problem in Paul's day and I bet it is a worse problem in our world today. How many Christians fill the pew on Sunday struggle during the week with sexual temptation?

We cannot make excuses because we live in the last days. We are living in a time that is like the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Still, we cannot make excuses. We cannot allow any excuses for immoral behavior just because we live in such a dark time in history. Instead, we need to go back to the Bible. What does scripture tell us?

We are to learn to possess our vessel in sanctification and honor. We need to understand that our body and spirit are one. It is a deception to separate what is of the body from what is of the spirit. The parts of man are combined together in one man. What we do with the body affects the spiritual life. What we do in our spirit affects the body. Therefore, we need to recognize we are a whole person.

The lie of the enemy is that what we do with the body does not matter. This was the lie which the culture in Paul's day taught people. They tried to say that what was of the spirit was good and it did not matter what a man did with his body. But it does matter. Spirit and body are one. What we do with one affects the other.

God has called us to live a holy life. We should never forget this even if we struggle with temptation and fail. Our goal is to be holy. This is not an impossible goal which the Lord put before us.

As we humble ourselves and confess our sins to the Lord Jesus he gives us grace to continue to get on our feet if we fail. We must continue to believe and have faith that we are called to complete purity and holiness before God. We cannot turn away from this standard.

Some Christians give up because of continued moral defeat. However, we must remember that our relationship with the Lord Jesus is based on what he did for us. He has cleansed us in his precious blood. He loves us. He will never give up on us. He will always help us overcome temptation and will not turn his back on us if we fail. Continue to trust in God's grace and goodness and believe that you can grow through failure.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

This church was taught by God to love one another. Not everything we learn about the Christian life comes from a human teacher or preacher, but much of it comes from God himself teaching us. God taught these Christians to love one another. Not only did they love the Christians in their local church but they loved the Christians in their entire region. Paul exhorted them to continue to love and allow their love to increase more and more.

We are taught to be productive. We are to have work that we are engaged in which provides for our daily needs so that we can live a life that no one can reproach or condemn. We are taught to be productive, to have lack of nothing, and to live an honest life toward people outside the church.

This is one way in which Christians reach the world for Christ. We go out into the world and act as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We share the gospel by living the Christian life in the world and then as opportunity arises we share with others why we live in such a way.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul said he did not want them to be ignorant, but I'm afraid many people are ignorant of what Paul taught here.

When Paul preaches the return of Christ he did so in the context of encouraging them about their loved ones who had died. He did not use the word "died" but instead "asleep", which followed the example of the Lord Jesus when he said Lazarus was "asleep". Jesus said to the sisters of Lazarus that he was the resurrection and the life. When Jesus comes back he will raise from the dead all those who believed in him.

Paul did not want them to grieve like those who had no hope. As believers in the gospel we have a glorious hope in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins on the cross, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again from the dead on the third day. This is our hope. Those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will also be raised from the dead. For those who believe in Jesus they never really die but just enter a better life with God.

Then Paul gave a detailed description of the return of the Lord. He said that those who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have died. The dead in Christ will rise

first. Then those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The event which Paul described in these verses is commonly called in English "The Rapture". It is the great catching away of God's people into the heavens. It will happen in the twinkling of an eye.

Prepare for this day for it will surely come. Prepare yourself by putting your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

There will be a time when great change will happen on this planet. That season and time is upon us even now as I write this. We are in the last days. Why did Paul say he did not need to write to them about the times and seasons? Because Jesus covered this in detail. The Lord told us what the times and seasons of the last days would be like.

Jesus taught us that he would come as a thief in the night. Now, we see a specific prophecy through Paul describing details about the last days that pinpoints us in that time frame. When "they" shall say "*Peace and Safety*". Who are "they"? "They" are the world of unbelievers. This points to those who only know the world system life. They do not know about God's kingdom or the return of the Lord. "They" will be saying "*Peace and safety*". Why would they say this? Because it will be a time of intense war and rumors of wars. We are living in that time. I've heard prominent politicians already in our day and time quoting these words "peace and safety".

Sudden destruction will come to this world. Most likely it will be a nuclear holocaust. Scripture says "*they will not escape*". There will be no where to run when this sudden destruction comes on the world.

Will the Lord Jesus rapture the church before this sudden destruction? From what I can see in the Bible the pattern is that God delivers his people before judgment strikes. I see this with Noah and the flood. I see this with Lot and Sodom. What is the pattern? The Lord knows those who are his, and those who trust in him he will not fail to rescue from the judgments that are coming on this earth. Read **Proverbs 3:25-26**.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

The word "darkness" has different shades of meaning in these verses. When he said that the brethren are not "in darkness" he meant that they have knowledge of upcoming events. They know about "the day of the Lord", which the general world population is in the dark about. They are ignorant of events in the future which the Christian knows about because we believe what Jesus taught and what Paul expounded on here. The day of the Lord is sure and it is coming toward us. The world in general never gives a single thought about this and if they do it is to scoff at it.

Then he changed the meaning of darkness when he said we are "children of light" to mean that the Christian is morally different than the world. Light and darkness become metaphors not only of knowledge about future events, but also describe the moral condition of the believer and unbeliever. Knowledge of the future in the Bible and a person's moral condition, therefore, are tied together in the mind of Paul. It is more evident to me the further I've traveled that when I walk close to the Lord the

truth of Christ's return is more real to me. In other words, the second coming of Christ has a direct impact on our moral lifestyle.

Paul also used another analogy or metaphor when he described the armor a Roman soldier would wear and applied this to the spiritual life of the Christian. Faith, love, and hope are real spiritual armor and weapons. The real battle is not the material one but it is the spiritual battle which takes place in the souls of men.

This is why I am convinced that the most important thing we can do for any problem in our world, including the environment, is to preach the gospel. At the heart of every problem is the problem of sin. There is only one answer to this problem: the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

God has not appointed us to wrath. There are many people who take this verse to mean that the church will be raptured before the seven year tribulation and I agree with them. I agree it makes sound Bible logic and sense that God would take out his people before the judgment in the book of Revelation falls on this world.

What is the pattern in the Bible? We see God delivered and saved Noah and his family during the flood. We see that God saved Lot and his family from the judgment upon Sodom. We see in the Bible that God delivered his people every time he poured out wrath on the ungodly world of unbelievers. During the time of famine in Elijah's day God saved a remnant of people.

I believe we can look forward with confidence as the signs of the last days fall on us that God will save us from his wrath. God has not appointed his people to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

These verses raise a question about what it means to be "*over you in the Lord*". If we think like the world system thinks then we get the picture of a pyramid or hierarchy. This is a top down system where everyone over you is like a boss who tells you what to do and you have to serve those who are over you. Is this what it means to be "over you in the Lord". I don't think so.

Go back and read again what Jesus taught his disciples about giving people titles. Go back and understand the distinction which Jesus made between Gentiles who lorded it over their subjects and how people should interact with one another in the church. If you can wrap your mind around that then come back and read Paul's description of those who labor and work in the church. They are over others in the church but in what sense? In the sense of the world system? Or, in the spiritual sense which the Lord Jesus outlined for us?

Being over someone in the church does not describe a position but rather a responsibility of oversight or service. Being "over" others in the church means we have a responsibility to serve and care and nurture and come alongside others and to know them.

Paul said those who do not directly work in the church show also "know" those who labor among them. They are to hold them in honor because of the work of the ministry they are engaged in.

There are distinctions made in how we relate to one man or another. Some can be corrected in a straight forward manner. Others need to be patted on the back and encouraged. Others need to be reasoned with. There are different ways of dealing with each individual. How will you know what to do? You must know the person. You must live with them, talk to them, listen to them, walk beside them. If you do not do this you cannot obey the instructions of dealing with each individual person in an individual manner. There is no one shoe which fits all. The only way you can find what shoe fits is to get down on your hands and knees and measure that man's foot. We must humble ourselves, in other words. There is no hint of lording over others within the church in Paul's instructions here.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-28

Rejoicing in the things of the world or this life are temporary joys. However, when we rejoice in the Lord we can rejoice forever. If we turn our heart to the Lord and rejoice in him then our joy will know no end. Praying will help our joy as it keeps our heart and mind focused on what truly matters. Only what is eternal truly matters and we should set our heart on it. It is natural to set the mind only on what is temporary and passing away but investing our mind, heart, and emotions into what is eternal will help us now and forever. As we rejoice and pray then we will find the ability to give thanks in everything. No matter if we are well provided and protected or if we face scarcity and danger the heart that is set on the Lord can always give thanks, always pray, and always rejoice in the Lord.

If we are to overcome temptation then we must flee from the appearance of evil. Those who do not abstain from the appearance of evil will eventually find themselves trapped by it.

We have a promise from the Lord. He is faithful. He will keep us, correct us, provide for us, protect us, and we will find everything we need in him.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians Chapter 1

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

The Thessalonian church endured afflictions and Paul made it clear there was a purpose for their suffering. He pointed to a spiritual process which took place in their lives. He described this process: *"that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God"*.

Does this mean what Christ did for us at Calvary was not sufficient? There is no contradiction here. What Christ did for us is completely sufficient to remove our sins and the penalty of our sins. However, forgiveness of sins is the beginning of a process of sanctification. We are sanctified by faith in the gospel and continue this process by abiding in the gospel and cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. The Lord continues to apply the gospel to our lives every day. The gospel was accomplished once and for all but the application of the gospel is a daily process which the Holy Spirit applies to us.

We were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. It is hard for us to wrap our mind around this because we are not used to seeing things from the perspective of eternity. We think in terms of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We cannot see ourselves the way the Lord does from heaven.

Paul gave thanks for them and acknowledged that their faith was growing and their love toward one another abounded. These qualities flow from real Christians. Christians will always have faith towards God and love for one another. There is no escaping this. It is a built-in, basic principle that Christians exhibit faith towards God and as a result will love one another.

Paul gloried in this church. Paul told other churches about the Thessalonians, and used them as an example to other churches of how to continue in faith and love while suffering affliction.

For a Christian suffering has context. There is a purpose in suffering. Suffering is not wasted. Suffering is used by God to transform us into what he designed us to be. We can trust God in the furnace of affliction to carry us and get us where we need to be. God is good, he is faithful, and he loves us more than we could ever comprehend.

2 Thessalonians 1:6

The Thessalonian church endured persecution by the religious and secular world. This is the pattern we see in the life of Christ and the church. Paul gave us a glimpse of an important truth. God will take care of the people who persecute us. It is a righteous thing that God will take care of them. How will he deal with them? He will recompense tribulation to them. God's wrath will come on the world that persecutes Israel, the church, and those in the kingdom. God's wrath is coming.

This wrath may seem like it takes a long time, but when it comes it will happen suddenly and with devastation. Sudden destruction will come on the world. Scriptures warn us repeatedly about the sudden desolation of the wicked. Read **Proverbs 3:25**, **Isaiah 47:11**, **1 Thessalonians 5:3**. How shall we then live? We should be patient and endure whatever affliction the world piles on. We should not try to assert ourselves but give place for the Lord to deal with our persecutors. Instead, our part is to humble ourselves and allow the Lord to defend us, protect us, and provide for us. He is more than able to do this. We must be still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will work on our behalf.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

These early Christians were troubled by persecution from the religious establishment and from the unbelieving government and society they were surrounded with. However, Paul invited them to rest with him. How could Paul rest? Because he knew the Lord Jesus would return and deal with those who persecuted the church. He knew the Lord Jesus would return to the earth.

The return of the Lord is in front of us, and not far away. The Lord Jesus is described as coming in "*flaming fire*" and "*taking vengeance*". The first time Jesus came to the earth it was as a suffering Savior. The next time he comes to this earth it will be in wrath and power. His enemies will fall at his feet and be crushed underneath his feet.

The Lord will return to punish the unbelieving world. The world will never acknowledge the justice of God's wrath because of their pride, unbelief, and stubbornness. But God is just. His wrath is just. He will consume all of his enemies with unquenchable fire.

Those who trust in the Lord Jesus as Savior have an invitation to rest. God will take care of the world. It is our place to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for him to act.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

One goal of the Christian is that the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in our lives. How can we accomplish this? One way I know for sure is to walk, live, and stand by faith. What do I mean by this?

For me, it starts with putting my faith in the gospel which is the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**)

We believe in our heart that Jesus died for us, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. We confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and we are saved. (**Romans 10:9-10**). By believing and confessing we simply agree with God that what he says is the truth. God is true whether or not we agree with him, but when we believe and agree then we can benefit from what Jesus accomplished for us.

This is the beginning of allowing the Lord Jesus Christ to be glorified in our lives. In the context of these scriptures I also see that part of Jesus being glorified in our lives is when we continue steadfastly to trust in God during times of persecution, affliction, and hardship. When we continue to give thanks to God no matter how bad our lives get then the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Standing firm when our faith is under fire brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another way to glorify Jesus is to constantly remember and believe that God is our provider and he is our protector. You see David repeating these two truths over and over in the book of Psalms. God provides for us. God protects us. You see these two principles in the prayer that the Lord taught his disciples. Give us this day our daily bread. Deliver us from evil. This addresses the basic truth that God is our provider and our protector. If you cannot believe these two simple truths then your life will not bring glory to Jesus. As a matter of fact, if you live like everything depends upon you then you will actually do the opposite and drive people away from having faith in Christ.

It all comes back to faith. Having faith in God for salvation. Having faith in God that he is sovereign over the events of our life. And having faith you will be provided for and protected by God.

My last point is this. Always remember that God is our goal. The Lord Jesus is our prize. He is our reward. He is our inheritance. This is the underlying goal in our life. We do not live for ourselves anymore. We live for the Lord Jesus. He is the goal and prize and reward we point ourselves toward.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

The context here was that someone was promoting inaccurate or false information about the "*day of Christ*". Paul was reassuring them of the doctrine which he preached about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him.

Someone tried to convince the Thessalonians that they missed the rapture of the church. However, Paul told them this was not possible because if the rapture had occurred then there would be specific events and specific people rising in world politics.

We can be assured the rapture has not happened. Why? Because there is not yet a man ruling a one world order political system. The church will already be raptured by the time the Antichrist takes control of the world system.

The rapture and the day of Christ were always a point of debate in the church. This is a doctrine which the enemy uses to attack and confuse people with. Why? Because it is what we are looking forward to. The church has prayed for two thousand years that Jesus will come back and God's kingdom will come to this earth. The enemy knows the Lord Jesus will return and establish his kingdom. However, this knowledge does not stop him from trying to supplant and replace God's kingdom with his own version of a new world order.

As time goes on we will continue to hear more and more about a global one world order. This is a sure sign we are getting closer to the return of the Lord and the rapture of the church.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

A major symptom of life in the last days is widespread deception. Paul warned us. Let no man deceive you. This was the same exhortation Jesus gave in **Matthew 24:4**. Why this repeated admonishment about deception?

It means there is a time (*which I think we are already entering*) in which it will be nearly impossible to discern between lies and truth. We see this already. Constantly the media repeats lies as truth and truth is retold as if it is a lie. What is dark is called light, and what is light is called darkness. What is evil is called good and what is good is called evil. People do not know anymore up from down or their left from their right.

There will be a falling away. I think this is more than just a religious falling away from the faith, but a falling away from generally known truth. Men will no longer hold the obvious truth, like the difference between men and woman. People are abandoning the obvious truth inherent in nature itself. When we reach this point then we have arrived at a "*falling away*".

There is a specific man in the future that the Bible calls "*the man of sin*". This man is also known as the Antichrist. He will pretend to be another Messiah or Christ. He will deceive the world through manipulating religion, politics, and the economy. He will ride in on a wave of one world unity in religion, politics, and the economy.

This man will have so much pride he will declare himself to be God. This does not seem so far fetched when we already have mega church preachers calling themselves 'gods', and preaching a message of self-worship. Their motto is live your best life now. Can't anyone see how blasphemous this message is?

People will believe in this false Christ. He will convince the world he is their savior. Jesus predicted this man would one day show up and be accepted by the world even as the real Jesus was rejected by

the world. However, this man of sin will only have a short season to rule the world. Seven years is not a long time in light of eternity.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-7

It is important to remember what we are taught. Paul asked the question: don't you remember what I told you? Do we remember what we learn? Do we remember past lessons and truths we have learned from the Lord?

Some lessons are more important than others so we need to know what is important to the Lord so we hold on to what the Lord thinks is important. The worldly mega preachers will tell you to remember positive verses that promise wealth and money. But is that what the Lord Jesus considered to be important? Read the word of Jesus himself on the topic of money. We need to remember what the Lord thinks is important. We need to remember mercy, love, humility, justice. These are things which are important to the Lord.

Paul asked them if they could remember what he taught them on the last days. He told them again that there was something in place right now which holds back the final surge of evil which results in the appearance of the Antichrist. What could possibly be holding back that kind of surge of evil? My opinion is that what restrains evil in the world today is the Holy Spirit working through the members of Christ's body the church. Take the church out of the way and what will be the result? It will be the sudden appearance on the world scene of a man who is evil incarnate.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-10

Almost as soon as this wicked man is revealed the world will be destroyed. Seven years is not a long time, but I'm sure the devil will make the most of his little window of time to wreck as much havoc as possible.

The Lord will simply say "poof" and this man will go down. Even the brightness of the return of Christ will destroy this man of sin.

This wicked man will appear with the power of Satan to perform all kind of magic tricks to amaze people. He will perform signs and lying wonders in order to deceive people who do not have a love for the truth. A lot of people today do not have any love for the truth in them.

I pray the Lord always give me a love for the truth. I want to live in the truth, walk in the truth, and agree with the truth even if the truth condemns me. It is so important to run after truth and not let go of it. Everything in this world system we live in will try to separate us from what is true.

In **Philippians 4:8** we are exhorted: "...*whatsoever things are true...think on these things.*" It requires determination and passion to pursue and hold the truth.

Jesus is the truth. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. Let us lay aside all lies and hypocrisy and seek him with all of our heart.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

The Bible plainly said here God himself will send strong delusion to cause people to believe the lie. This lie is very specific. For those who do not read the entire Bible in context these verses may cause a lot of problems. An ignorant man could take these verses out of context and blame God that men are damned and go to hell.

Is God unjust? Is he not giving these men what they want? Look closely. These people already chose to reject the truth. They were exposed to the truth. Someone shared the gospel with them, and they rejected the gospel. They rejected that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. What is the result? A time comes when God will draw a line in the sand and those who are on the wrong side will no longer be able to escape the choice they already made.

People choose to reject the truth. Sooner or later, in every person's life, they are no longer capable of hearing or comprehending truth any longer. They become lost in their own lies and delusions.

The entire world will be turned over to their depravity and insanity. Men reject the truth and eventually mankind crosses a line as a whole where it can no longer be turned away from the darkness any longer. Then God allows man what man already chose to have: lies, delusions, and darkness.

I pray the Lord will search my heart now and deliver me from every lie and delusion. I pray for God to correct me and rebuke me and help me to stay humble so that I can be taught the truth. I want to have a love of the truth in my heart. I want to love Jesus more than I love myself.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

As it is Paul's pattern he gives thanks for the churches and for individual believers. Paul expressed his gratitude for the Thessalonians. He gave thanks for them "always", which means as an ongoing part of his prayer life he remembered them and thanked the Lord for them. They were beloved of the Lord. Paul knew that the Lord loved these people, and so he loved them, because Paul loved the Lord. If we love the Lord then we are bound to give thanks for others who love the Lord, and we will also love others who love the Lord. The Lord Jesus is the center of our love for one another. He is worthy of our love, our worship, our affection, our service, and our surrender.

God chose them from the beginning. Isn't that wonderful? God chose us, and so we can rest in his love for us. We have not earned God's love. We did not choose God but he chose us. Praise God that he first loved us. The Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts in a process of sanctifying us. This means he continues each day to set us apart from the world system and from how the natural man thinks and lives. We become more spiritual each day as we listen to and obey the Holy Spirit.

This process begins, continues, and ends with simple faith in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are saved by believing in the gospel. We continue to be saved each day by the gospel, and we will be saved in the future from this body of death by the truth of the gospel. What is this gospel that is so basic to everything in the Christian life? The gospel is this: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. There were many people who were witnesses of the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have their testimony today in the Holy Bible. If we reject the truth in scripture we are rejecting God's revelation of who is. How sad for people who claim to know God but reject the scripture. They exalt their own minds and opinions over the plain truth in

God's word. Pride makes it impossible for them to trust the gospel. But how simple the gospel is. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He took our place at Calvary.

We need to stand fast in the gospel. This is the true tradition that Paul delivered to the churches. The tradition we hold to is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Paul placed the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father beside each other. In his mind, they are two persons who exist as one God. Throughout the New Testament we see this pattern that God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. Jesus himself taught us to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We see this reality again at the baptism of Jesus, and it is all through Paul's letters over and over again. It is difficult for me to understand why people reject this obvious truth in the Bible. It must be because if people reject this about God it takes away something basic of our understanding of who God is, and as a result people get a corrupted version of the gospel message.

We have an eternal comfort and a good hope through grace. It is God's grace that puts our heart at rest. We now have peace with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished through his crucifixion, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. It is this finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes peace between us and God. We can now approach God's throne of grace with confidence and can appeal to the Lord on the behalf of ourselves and others.

God wants us to be comforted by the truth of the gospel. It is this deep and eternal comfort in God's love that inspires our good works and words. From this point of inspiration many mighty works were accomplished for the furtherance of God's kingdom and the gospel. Any other motive will fall short. Our goal and purpose is the love of God. Anything less will ultimately not reach the mark and goal found in the grace of God.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 3

2 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Paul told the church he prayed for them, and he also asked them to pray for him and his fellow workers. What is Paul's prayer request? That the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. This is a prayer request that God's word can be preached effectively and that people will come to the saving knowledge of the gospel as a result. However, where the gospel is preached there will always be people who will rise up to oppose and resist the preaching. Paul also prayed that he would be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Wicked men are always unreasonable. They are unreasonable because their lives are built on delusion and lies. They are unreasonable because the way they live does not follow truth and logic so they must resist truth and reason and logic.

Paul said that not all men have faith. Not everyone who is born will believe in God and accept the gospel. Many people will reject the message of the Lord Jesus and suffer the eternal consequences for their choice of unbelief.

Paul turned this sad fact around, however, and reminded them that the Lord is faithful who will establish them in their faith and will keep them from evil. This is the prayer which the Lord Jesus taught his disciples: *"..lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.."*

We should make this a part of our prayers. God is our protector. We should pray and ask God for and trust in his protection. God is our provider. We pray and ask him and thank him each day for our daily bread. God is our portion. May his name be glorified and magnified. May his kingdom be established upon this earth.

2 Thessalonians 3:4-5

Paul was confident in the Lord that the Thessalonians would follow his instructions. Paul gave them "commands". These are straight forward instructions on how to live the Christian life. He was confident that they would follow this because Paul received his knowledge by revelation from the Lord Jesus. He did not follow some kind of man-made doctrine or teaching. He preached the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He preached Christ Jesus crucified, buried, and risen from the dead on the third day.

Notice Paul prayed that the Lord would direct their heart into the love of God. What does this mean? God's love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Christian life. We love God because he first loved us. If we believe in God then we will love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Love and faith go hand in hand.

What is the patient waiting for Christ? Jesus left this earth after his resurrection. He went back to heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God Almighty. The Lord Jesus lives forever to make intercession for us. One day the Lord Jesus will return. He will appear in the clouds over the earth and the church will be called up to meet him in the air. After the conclusion of the seven year tribulation the Lord Jesus will return to the earth and set foot on the Mount of Olives. He will establish his kingdom over all the nations of the earth.

We are patiently waiting for God's kingdom to take over this planet. This is what we pray continually. *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven."*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Paul warned them about other Christians in the church. He said there was a type of Christian we should avoid. What type of Christians should we avoid? The word used here is "disorderly". In the context this word must mean Christians who do not participate in being productive or making a livelihood. They do not have a job. They are unemployed. They are not looking for work.

There are a lot of ways to be employed. Not everyone has to sign up for a paycheck in order to be productive. There are many types of work we can participate in which will help others and provide for ourselves. However, as a general rule of thumb, most of us will go out and find a job and work and earn a paycheck. Notice Paul made this point even more clear by pointing to himself as an example of someone who worked hard to pay his own way. He did not depend on others but worked hard, while preaching, to pay his own way.

What is the purpose of working? The primary benefit of working is so you can buy your own groceries. You can pay your own bills. To fail, at least to try, to find a job is to be disorderly, according to Paul. If you come across someone like this stay clear of them.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-18

Here we have Paul's concluding remarks in this second letter to the Thessalonians. He gave specific instructions on dealing with brethren who do not take this letter to heart. Paul already anticipated that there would be people in the church who disregarded his letter and did not follow his instructions. This is the same attitude Moses and Joshua both had at the end of their lives when they gave their final commands to Israel. They knew Israel would be disobedient and turn aside after other gods. They knew what human nature was like. So did Paul. He knew that people in the church were still just people, like you and me. We need to be admonished to obey God's word. There is always a place for a preacher to exhort and admonish people to be obedient. This is not legalism. This is practical exhortation.

Don't be afraid to rebuke, correct, and exhort people. We all need it. We all have blind spots. We all go astray, like the Psalmist admitted about himself in **Psalm 119:176**, *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."*

Hide God's word in your heart. Find ways to relate scripture to your every day life. Put it into practice. Remember, apply, and obey God's word. Find brothers and sisters in Christ who will exhort you, correct you, and point out your blind spots. Spiritual growth is not accomplished in solitude. Spiritual growth is accomplished in a community of believers who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

The First Epistle to Timothy

1 Timothy Chapter 1

1 Timothy 1:3-4

"No other doctrine". Those words stand out to me. What does it mean? Paul told Timothy to command the Ephesians to teach no other doctrine. What is the doctrine Paul told Timothy to command the Ephesians to teach? What is the doctrine that was to be proclaimed, taught, and preached?

It can only be the gospel outlined by Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. The gospel outlined by Paul was that **Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures**.

Paul asked Timothy to stay in Ephesus while he journeyed on to Macedonia. His request for Timothy to stay was to keep other people in line. He went on to say that people are easily distracted by *"fables"* and *"endless genealogies"*. People were sidetracked on many topics and this includes people who try to teach the Bible in a systematic way. But what is the one doctrine we should teach, preach, and proclaim? Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again.

This gospel is what we need for godly edifying. This gospel not only saves us from our sins but it breaks the power of sin. This gospel humbles us and shows us ourselves in truth. We can see how much God hates sin and punishes sin when we look at Calvary. We can see how much God loves us. He sent his one and only Son to die in our place. Jesus received the punishment for our sins and in our place. It is amazing that people do not fall down at the foot of Calvary and thank God for his grace and mercy.

Everyone who continues in self-righteousness will suffer what Christ suffered at Calvary: separation from God. Separation from God does not sound horrible right now. But consider that everything good in this world comes from God. Consider that without God giving us structure, light, purpose, and common grace all we would have is unending darkness and suffering. That is hell. That is what is waiting for those who turn their backs on the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:5-7

There are people who teach scripture but miss the point of why they teach scripture. Paul showed us the goal when we teach God's word. The goal is a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. We should take a closer look at these.

A pure heart can only come when a person no longer relies on their efforts to rid themselves from sin. Instead, when a person trusts in the Lord Jesus and his work then can he have a pure heart. A pure heart can only come through having faith in the gospel. **Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.**

A good conscience means that our conscience which accuses us is silenced. How is this possible? It is only possible when the conscience believes that guilt is removed. God created us with a conscience which can only be satisfied by the gospel. Only when a man believes the good news of Jesus Christ can his conscience be satisfied and relieved of the burden of guilt.

Faith unfeigned means a sincere attitude of believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a faith which does not have ulterior motives. It trusts what God said in his word.

When people turn away from the gospel they will teach strange doctrines and use scripture to support strange topics. They think they help people when in reality they are turned aside to empty talk. Vain jangling means their teaching does not help anyone. It is only talk. It is empty words.

People desire to be teachers of God's word for a lot of reasons. Some who are naturally gifted as public speakers may feel a desire to be in front of people in order to build a name for themselves. We should be careful when listening to anyone teaching God's word to evaluate if what they say leads men to a pure heart, a clean conscience, and to faith unfeigned.

1 Timothy 1:8-11

How do we use the law in a lawful manner? We do not try to bring a righteous man into bondage to the law by telling him to be a moral man. We do not tell a righteous man he should obey the ten commandments in order to be holy and sanctified. The law was not made for a righteous man. The law is made for men who are law breakers and rebels.

This is a basic mistake people make when they teach the Bible. It is a basic mistake to think teaching scripture means we teach people a list of rules, or morals, or how to live a good life. This is not the correct way to handle scripture.

Scripture is used to point men to Christ alone. That is all. Once a man is born again and has Christ Jesus in his heart then he is made righteous by God. A righteous man does not need to be taught to do what is right. He will automatically desire righteousness. He will automatically pursue holiness. Any

born again man will desire to obey the will of God and the word of God. He does not need to be taught God's law because the law of God is written on his heart. He has the Holy Spirit living inside him and the Holy Spirit wrote the law of God.

One generation makes the mistake of teaching morality as Christianity. The next generation takes this a step further and teaches Christianity is about self-improvement and having a positive attitude. The generation after that no longer worship God any longer. They worship Self.

The solution is to preach the gospel. **Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.** Outside of Christ you are worthless, hopeless, and are set on fire by hell. There is no hope outside the gospel of Jesus Christ now or in eternity.

1 Timothy 1:12-14

Paul's ministry was enabled by the Lord Jesus. God gave him the grace and mercy he needed to fulfill the work which God called him to do. This is a great encouragement to anyone who has heard the voice of the Lord. When the Lord calls us he also enables us to hear and to do what he wants us to do. He gives us grace to do his will. His grace empowers us. His grace sustains us. His grace encourages us, protects us, and provides for us.

Paul knew exactly what kind of person he was when he met the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. He did much harm to the church. But then God stepped into Paul's life and turned it all around. He opened Paul's ears so he could hear his voice. He gave him a heart to hear and to obey what he said to him.

He does the same today. The Lord speaks to us, and takes our ruined lives and turns it all around so we can honor him and bring glory to his name. We have all been ignorant and in unbelief. But God shined his light into the darkness of our night and led us out. He translated us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ.

Now we have faith in the Lord Jesus and we love the brethren. May the Lord help us to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ every day.

1 Timothy 1:15-16

Paul's life was an example of the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. When looking at Paul we should always keep this in memory. Paul's mission was to preach the gospel of grace. His life was an example of God's grace. Paul was the worst kind of sinner and rebel against God before he was saved. Before Paul met Christ he was the furthest anyone could possibly get from being a Christian. However, after he met the Lord Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit he became an example of how God can forgive anyone. God can save any person who will believe and receive the gospel.

Anyone who trusts the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf will be saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This is the gospel which saves our soul and gives us eternal life.

Paul said if he could be saved then anyone could be saved. This is the message of the gospel of grace. God can save anyone who will believe and trust in Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:17-20

Paul returned praise to God, and described God as eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. We should meditate on these words. He is invisible. He is immortal. He is eternal. Thinking about this description should cause our understanding of God to expand beyond man-made religions. It is interesting to me that false gods are usually depicted as something people can see like an image, idol, or a picture in some way. However, God is invisible. You cannot see him. But you can hear his voice. He will speak to you. God will communicate with you in words you can hear and understand. This is how he has chosen to reveal himself to us. He gave us his word. He gave us his Son, Jesus Christ, who is described as the Word of God by John in his gospel and letters.

Paul described ministry as "*warfare*". From this we understand we have a spiritual enemy who withstands our efforts to preach the gospel. How do we fight a good fight of faith? We must hold onto faith and a good conscience. We hold onto the faith by holding the gospel: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Jesus is alive. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. He lives now to intercede for us. He will return to rapture the church and establish his kingdom on this earth. Jesus will rule an earthly kingdom for a thousand years and then everything will be complete in the New Jerusalem. This is a plain description of the facts of the gospel and what is still in front of us to look forward to.

Some people will not hold to the gospel. They will turn away from the faith and will not keep a clean conscience. Paul gave the names of two men he knew who turned away from the faith and a good conscience. Paul said he turned these men over to Satan so that they would learn not to blaspheme. I have no idea what Paul meant when he said he turned people over to Satan. Whatever it means it must have been a painful experience for the blasphemers.

One thought to keep in mind. It is possible to shipwreck your faith. This is why the preaching of the gospel is important. Without this gospel of grace men will certainly go astray and get messed up.

1 Timothy Chapter 2

1 Timothy 2:1-4

Paul exhorted Timothy, and those whom Timothy could influence, and so also us to this day. We are exhorted to pray with different types of prayers. These prayers include supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks. This was to be done for all men. We are to pray for unbelievers as well as those within the household of faith. We are to pray for those in authority in government. Why? So we can lead quiet and peaceable lives in godliness and honesty. It is always easier to serve God when you are not being persecuted by your government. But that is exactly what happened during Paul's day. Christians were killed and persecuted by government. However, Paul told them to pray for the government and for those in government. We should pray for peace in our country, our state, our county, our city. Pray for the area where you live. Pray for the leaders. Ask God to intervene in the lives of those in positions of authority.

It is God's will for them to be saved. Somehow our prayers for them makes a difference. It makes a way for these people to hear the gospel and be saved. It is easy to forget to pray for those in authority. The natural man rebels against authority. However, a spiritual man will pray for those in authority. A

spiritual Christian does not rebel against authority but prays for them. Paul set an example in his exhortation, and also in the testimony of his life. He was a witness to both small and great. Follow his example and be ready to share the gospel with those we come in contact with.

1 Timothy 2:5-6

There are not many gods. There is only one God. People want to believe there are more than one God or that everyone's god is valid. But this cannot be. There can only be one God. If we look at this from a man-centered, humanistic viewpoint then it seems narrow minded to believe there is only one God. However, if you are willing to accept reality as it is then it makes plain sense there is only one God.

There must be a mediator between God and men. Why is this? Why must there be a mediator? Because God is holy, righteous, and pure. God is perfect and complete. However, men are broken, sinful, wayward, selfish, dirty, and completely unholy and unrighteous. How can the two come together? There must be someone who can stand in-between these two and be a mediator. Christ Jesus is our mediator. He is both fully man and fully God, and therefore he is God's perfect prophet and man's perfect priest. He is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other. Mary cannot help. A priest cannot help. Only Christ can help us.

Jesus gave himself on the cross as a ransom for us. He paid the price of our sins himself. Because the Lord Jesus paid the price for our sins God can now pardon us and be completely just in hating sin. God hates sin. Anyone who puts themselves on the side of sin and Satan are the enemies of God.

If we trust in Jesus and put our faith in his work then God forgives our sins and wipes out the evil we did in our lives. He wipes it away. He gives us a clean slate. A new beginning. In Christ Jesus there is always a new beginning. His mercies are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness.

1 Timothy 2:7-8

Paul was ordained a preacher. He was not ordained by man to be a preacher. He made this clear in the book of Galatians and in his testimony that he was not ordained or sent by man but was called and set apart by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a job; this is not a career. This is a calling from the Lord. He was ordained a preacher and an apostle. An apostle is someone sent with a special message from God. Paul stayed with the message he received from God. His message was straight forward: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Those who die in Christ also live in Christ. God himself places us into his son. This is the work of the Lord from first to last.

Why did Paul say he spoke the truth in Christ and did not lie? Because the weapon of the devil is to accuse others of lying. A liar accuses other people of lies. Remember, the devil is the accuser of the brethren. However, Paul solemnly testified the gospel he preached was not from man or by man, but he received it by revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

He also described himself as a teacher of the Gentiles. Paul knew from the Lord that the church was more than Jewish believers in the Messiah. The church is made of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore our ministry should always be to every man, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul said he preached the gospel to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. (**Romans 1:16**).

Part of the Christian life is prayer. Paul spoke a lot about our prayer life. He talked about his prayers, and gave specific instruction on how to pray and what to pray for. Already in this chapter we have instructions on praying for those God puts in a position of authority. We are to pray and intercede for people that they may come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember this was a letter of personal instructions to a young pastor. These are the ideas pastors need to communicate to themselves and their congregations. We must continually remind people to be humble toward authority, to pray for people, and to keep our mind fixed on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

What is the underlying point here? Paul is addressing men and women in the church. He is teaching women to put emphasis on their spiritual lives. It is easier to focus on the outward appearance of the face with makeup and jewelry and neglect the spiritual beauty on the inside. Paul exhorts women, therefore, to take time to invest in their inner beauty and spiritual growth. There is also some plain instructions here that women are not to have authority over men in the church or teach men in the church. Why is this? Paul ties it back to the Garden of Eden and with Adam and Eve. He points back to the original order God put in place for men and women from the beginning. Jesus also used this principle when he taught about marriage. He pointed back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and how God established creation, man, woman, and marriage from the beginning.

In today's world people make up reality as they go. They try to pretend men are women and women are men. Why do they do this? My theory is this is Satan's method of destroying the image of God. He is trying to blot out the fact that mankind is made in the image of God.

Paul also underlined the importance of the role of women in nurturing their children. Men can leave a legacy through preaching in the church but it is women who nurtured those men when they were boys. Who has the most influence in the church? Each one has important roles. Men and women have distinct roles and responsibilities in the home and church. By blurring these distinctions we only invite confusion and heart break into our homes and churches.

1 Timothy Chapter 3

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Paul addressed church leadership. The word "bishop" was used, but how can we know what a bishop looked like in the early church? How do we know when people in church corporations appropriate that word today that it means anything like it did in the early church? I will stick to the simplest meaning of "bishop" I can come up with, and that is simply church leadership.

To desire to lead others is not a bad thing. Paul said to desire to be a leader was to desire a good work. The church needs good leaders and those leaders should have a will to work. However, leadership within the church is not like leadership in the world system. People easily confuse leadership in the church with the leadership model in the world system. The worldly model of leadership is all some people know. Paul gives us a precise description of leadership in the church.

The character qualities of church leaders: blameless, a husband (man, by implication) with one wife, vigilant, sober, good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, does not drink alcohol, doesn't get into

physical fights, is not in the ministry for money, patient, not covetous, manages his own family and house, children are obedient, not a young Christian, but a seasoned, older Christian, and has a good reputation.

This is a specific list and we would be hard pressed to find men today who qualify for this role in the church. However, this is the scripture. This is the Holy Spirit telling us what to look for in a church leader. If a man does not live up to this he should not be allowed to lead the church. If a church or ministry allows a leader who does not follow this then they are inviting trouble. There will be problems and people will get hurt and will be vulnerable to attacks of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Paul addressed the subject of church leaders. He spoke on bishops and now he focused on deacons.

This list is the same or similar as the one for bishops. Paul touched on the following areas: serious attitude, plain talking, stay away from alcohol, don't get into the ministry for money, pure conscience, a mind that holds onto the gospel, proven by examination from the church, and family relationships must be biblical.

One thing added to Paul's statement regarding deacons was this promise that a man who used the office of a deacon well purchased to himself a "good degree, and great boldness in the faith". My take here is that faithful service increases our ability to share the gospel, to deal with people in spiritual matters, and also increases and strengthens our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus. I have found from experience while serving in a ministry that this is true. Serving others in ministry does increase and strengthen one's own spiritual muscle, and enables one to learn how to help others and also provides a man with a good reputation.

1 Timothy 3:14-16

Paul repeated the gospel. He described the incarnation of Christ. God became a man in Jesus Christ. This is a mystery. Notice Paul said this message was preached to the Gentiles. It is important to remember the gospel is for everyone and not just a select group. The gospel is preached to everyone. Not everyone will believe the gospel, but we proclaim the gospel to every man. Some will believe the gospel. This message is received and believed by some people. The Lord Jesus was received up to glory. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. After spending time with his followers after his resurrection he ascended to heaven. This is described in the gospel accounts and at the beginning of the book of Acts.

Paul described the church. He said the church is the pillar and ground of truth. Many people interpret this to mean their particular brand of doctrine or denomination is the only church. This is not what Paul said. There was no such thing as a catholic or protestant church when Paul wrote this. The church was the people all over the world who believed the gospel and confessed with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Paul wrote this to Timothy so he would know how to conduct himself in the church. How do we conduct ourselves? Are we abiding in the gospel so when we have an opportunity to speak the gospel comes out of our mouth? Does the word of God saturate our thoughts and soul? What comes out of our

mouth? Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

1 Timothy Chapter 4

1 Timothy 4:1-5

In the last days people who think they are "*of the faith*" will turn their back on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead of sticking with the truth men will turn to false gospels. Seducing spirits will take control of churches and doctrines of demons will spread through the religious world. I believe I am living in that day the Holy Spirit described in this passage. We are living in a time of apostasy. Today people are turning to false doctrines and teachings promoted by evil spirits.

Paul gave us two things to look for in those who promote doctrines of devils. One is the teaching that men should abstain from eating certain kinds of foods. Another is the teaching that forbids people from getting married. I do not know how anyone can look at the Catholic church and not see that it promotes both of these doctrines of devils. They are not the only false church promoting a false gospel. Some other cults are Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and more than I could ever list. They permeate society today. They are on every street corner handing out tracts and promoting heresies.

People who promote doctrines of devils show by their words and actions that their conscience is corrupted. I've never seen anything that can mess up a man's conscience worse than false religious beliefs. It will totally destroy a man's conscience. I've known pagans who had more of an intact conscience than some of the religious nuts I have met in my life.

May the Lord deliver us from lies. May the Lord help us to cultivate a love of the truth. May we abide in God's word and stay in prayer. We need to watch, pray, and stay close to the Lord in these last days.

1 Timothy 4:6-8

A good minister of Jesus Christ reminds people of the truth in the gospel. We nourish ourselves with the gospel so when we speak what comes out of us is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We turn away from telling stories and instead train ourselves to speak the truth in love. We exercise ourselves to live and speak what encourages and promotes godliness. Physical exercise does some good but spiritual exercise goes beyond this current, temporary life and enters the eternal world of God's kingdom.

Brothers are easily lured into forgetting the basic gospel. We should constantly remind ourselves of the gospel, and in everything we say let the truth of Christ's work come out of us. The Lord Jesus Christ took our place on the cross at Calvary. He bore the burden of our sins on that tree. He became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. God placed our sins on the Lord Jesus so that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus could be placed on us. He took our place. Now we live for him. We no longer live for ourselves but instead we live for him who died for us and rose again.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and unrighteousness. Go to God and confess your sins to him. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We cannot hide anything from God. The darkness is as light to him. He can see through the darkness as if it

is day. Nothing is hidden from the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of our lives.

Every idle word shall be examined. Do we have a fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is clean and good for you. It helps us live a pure and holy life. Let us pray we can live in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bind us together with cords of love that cannot be broken.

1 Timothy 4:9-11

Paul worked and suffered in ministry. His reason for working and suffering was because he trusted in the living God. Why did Paul refer to God as the "living" God? To Paul the Lord Jesus was not only a historical person, but someone who spoke to him, who communed with him, who communicated with him. Paul had a living relationship with God. How is our relationship with God? Is he a living God to us?

Notice how inclusive the gospel was to Paul. Paul said God was the Savior of all men. Jesus died for all men on the cross. The man who believes that Christ died for him personally benefits personally from what Christ did for him. However, the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was not just for certain men. It was for everyone who believed. Jesus died for all men. This is a gospel for everyone. The man who hears, believes, and receives can benefit from what Christ accomplished.

This is what we should teach and preach. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Turn away from man-made religion and philosophy and embrace the saving message of the gospel.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Believe in the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved today.

1 Timothy 4:12-16

Paul encouraged his son in the faith not to let his young age deter or discourage him from standing up for the truth of the gospel. Repeatedly Paul exhorted Timothy to meditate on doctrine. This is the key. The truth should permeate us so much that we speak the truth to anyone no matter who they are. In this way we overcome the fear of man. The most important thing we can do is preach the word of God without any fear of reprisal.

Not only did Paul teach Timothy but there were others who prayed for Timothy and confirmed his calling to ministry. We need to think about this. God uses people to confirm his calling on our lives. He can give us leaders and brothers in Christ who will encourage us in the work God called us to. We do not serve God on our own. We must serve the Lord in ministry in cooperation with brothers and sisters in Christ. No one can truly serve in the ministry alone. Paul made this clear in his letters. He always mentioned co-workers in ministry and the importance of humility toward people.

The word "save" here pointed to sanctification. Receiving eternal life comes completely by faith in the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Nothing I can do to improve upon the salvation Jesus provided. We do cooperate with the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying work. This cooperation comes by staying in the word, meditating on the gospel, and by agreement to the truth.

It should be obvious we are making spiritual progress. If people cannot tell we are growing in the Lord then something is wrong. We must stick to the basics. Stay in the word. Stay in prayer. Meditate on the gospel. Commune with the Lord every day. This is the most important thing we can do every day.

Our effectiveness in helping others depends on our continual spiritual growth and communion with the Lord. The greatest gift we can give co-workers, family, and brothers in Christ is to stay close to Jesus.

1 Timothy Chapter 5

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Paul outlined for Timothy the best method of dealing with different groups of people. He addressed first of all how to treat an elderly man. Paul said to treat him as a father. In other words, do not be condescending and do not be harsh. Instead, work with him to persuade him to do what is right and live according to truth. I have found from experience, when dealing with elderly people, this method is more effective than harsh correction. Older people will not listen, usually, unless they feel like you respect them. Even if they do not deserve your respect, if you will be effective in turning them toward the gospel, then you must deal with them in this manner of appealing to them rather than commanding them.

Younger men are to be treated as brothers. I wouldn't know how this works because my brother never had much to do with me. However, I guess this would mean you should treat younger men with compassion and affection and again not to be harsh with them. There is always a real temptation to belittle others or be condescending. Instead, we should be wholehearted, straight forward, and sincere with older and younger men. The longer I go on the more I am dealing with those much younger than myself. I have to remember to go easy on young people who are easily influenced and restrain myself from being harsh or overbearing.

Older women are to be treated as mothers and the younger women as sisters. In Paul's time these were simple and easy to understand instructions. It is harder in today's world for people to understand how to treat others like family. What is the family today? Most families are shattered, broken, and splintered in pieces. People have no example today to know how to show respect, humility, and compassion.

May the Lord help us remember the old ways of treating people with respect and dignity. We should seek to persuade people to see truth instead of harsh confrontation. Honey does better at drawing people in rather than vinegar.

1 Timothy 5:3-16

The subject in this section is identifying and helping widows. Paul defined what a widow was. He then instructed family members to take this responsibility, and if no one was found to help then the church could help. It almost seemed Paul was doing all he could to teach that the church should be a last resort instead of the first place people turn for provision.

Widows, as defined by Paul, were over a certain age, had a specific reputation, and had no family members to help them. When these qualifications were met then the church was supposed to step in and help the widow. This was very important in Paul's day because there was no social security to fall back

on or social provisions made for the elderly or widowed. Families had to take care of each other. If there was no family then the spiritual family took over this responsibility.

Notice Paul used strong language when people call themselves Christian and fail to take care of family. He said someone who called himself a Christian but failed to help family were worse than unbelievers. How is this possible? The reason this was so bad was because they gave the name of Christ a bad reputation. People do this all the time today. People call themselves Christian and entire churches give the name of Jesus a bad reputation because they do not help people who are in need. There is no outreach happening in a lot of churches. Worse yet, church becomes a social club or a place of entertainment for people. Why is this happening? I think it points to where we are in the timeline of the last days. People are way off track with scripture, even in churches who claim to teach the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse.

Each individual needs to let the Lord convict their conscience regarding these matters. If we have someone who is elderly and a widow in our families we should try to help them. Period. If you don't help then please don't tell anyone you are a Christian.

1 Timothy 5:17-20

Elders could be those who were older but I think this pointed to leadership and especially those who led by teaching God's word. What is the message? People who labor in the church should receive financial support. Plain and simple. Also, we should protect people in leadership from reckless accusations. However, if someone in leadership is found to be in sin then it is to be rebuked in public so everyone can learn a lesson. So what are the points Paul covered? Pay the minister. Protect the ministry from reckless or unwarranted accusation. If the minister sins he needs to be exposed publicly for this. This is probably as a safeguard because who wants a sinning Pastor over a flock of unsuspecting sheep?

The part about rebuking someone who labored in the church is probably left to someone further up the chain of leadership than the Pastor. This means there needs to be a system of accountability. In some churches this will be a deacon board. In some churches this is a some kind of board like corporations have. At the very least anyone who is in the ministry should make themselves accountable to someone else who is working in the ministry, like another Pastor or co-laborer. Beware of anyone in the ministry who does not accept accountability or will not submit to others for moral or ethical auditing.

Notice Paul emphasized those working in the ministry deserve honor and respect. There is not a lot of people who will listen to God and allow God to use them in full time work within the church. Those who do accept this calling are often overlooked and disrespected by those on the outside and from within the congregation. It really is a thankless job. Probably few people can survive this kind of work unless they are well paid or unless they absolutely heard the voice of God calling them to this work.

1 Timothy 5:21-25

This is a strong exhortation to observe and do according to Paul's instructions. Paul invoked God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels. He put these words in bold letters and underlined this for Timothy. He commanded him to observe these instructions without partiality toward one person over another. Why is this so dangerous? Why is it so important to treat everyone the same?

What does it mean to "*lay hands suddenly on no man*". I think this points to ordaining people in the ministry. This points to letting people in the ministry who are unqualified or do not have the qualities Paul outlined in this letter. It can be hard to hold people we like to the same standards as someone whom we do not like. However, Paul says to treat everyone the same. No one should receive preferred treatment. The world system is the complete opposite of this.

In the world system everything depends on a person's position and status. In the church, and the kingdom which is coming to this world, a person's title, name, and position do not matter. All that matters was that we were faithful with what God gave us. Remember we should want to hear the Lord say to us, "Well done good and faithful servant". The Lord does not reward us for elevating men over other men. He does not reward us for climbing up some economic, social, and business ladder. That reward is in the world system, but it should not be honored in the church.

However, what do we see today? People are honored by their titles, their positions, their certificates. They are honored because of who they know or are close to. This is in the outward church.

This is how I know that the majority of what we see in the outward church is just like the world. Many churches are just like corporations and worldly businesses and the people are a product which is bought and sold.

Paul concluded his comments with some instructions for Timothy to take care of his health. We must remember our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and we need to strive to take care of our health with exercise, eating right, and getting proper rest.

1 Timothy Chapter 6

1 Timothy 6:1-2

We can translate these instructions into the employee and employer relationship. The lesson is to work hard, do a good job, but even more so if you happen to work for a Christian boss. Why? Because he is your brother in Christ! People tend to take advantage of Christians. Paul spoke to this. We are not to slack off because the boss is a Christian. We know a Christian shows mercy and grace. So people get lazy. But that is not the right answer. Instead, Paul taught us to work hard for the boss who is a Christian because he is a brother in Christ. We should want to benefit and help brothers in Christ.

There is another motive we should have for doing a good job and that is so we give the Lord Jesus a good reputation. If people know we are a Christian then we should want to work hard so we can make the Lord look good to other people. We do not want to give the Lord a bad name in front of unbelievers. The work place is where we spend most of our lives. It should be the place where we put our faith into practice. God has called us to be salt and light in the world and what better place to put this into action than the workplace.

Do you work hard? Do you get to work on time and put in a full day of work? Or are you lazy? Do you rebel against the authority placed over you? Can you receive correction, instruction, and direction from those who are over you? Your ability to humble yourself in the workplace and do what you are told will be a witness for or against the Lord Jesus. Keep that in mind next time you clock in at work.

1 Timothy 6:3-8

We have the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels and also in the book of Acts and in the book of Revelation. We have direct quotes which the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples. We have these words still with us today. Is this what we focus our mind on? Do we read and meditate on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. If not, then do you think it comes out in teaching, preaching, or sharing with others? Probably not. What you put in your heart is what will come out of your mouth.

Paul underlined what he called the "*doctrine which is according to godliness*". There is a doctrine, a specific teaching, which causes men to grow in godliness and spiritual maturity. What is this doctrine? In the next verse Paul described people who were proud and who argued over words. These people were promoting an alternative gospel or promoting something which took away from the preaching of the gospel. I was in a Sunday School one time with a person like this. They didn't come right out and try to preach another gospel but instead constantly stirred up strife, disagreed with the teacher, or tried to take over the class by talking or getting the teaching off on to some other topic. They created controversy or brought confusion into the classroom. In my opinion, people like this have some area of compromise in their lives which leave them open to be influenced by evil spirits to suppress the truth of the gospel.

Another distortion of the gospel is when men preach about financial gain. This kind of false doctrine and gospel has taken over entire church denominations in America. The false teaching of the prosperity gospel permeates most of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, and probably is in other more conservative denominations as well. People who are influenced by these false gospels are all about "positive" thoughts, words, confessions. Eventually you can pick them out because everything they teach leads back to self-improvement, self-enhancement, and living the good life in the here and now. They don't spend much time preparing people for heaven and eternity, but instead give three point sermons on how to live a good, moral life in the here and now.

A key word which stands out to me in these verses is contentment. Also, since false teachers are proud then our goal should be to humble ourselves. We should live humble lives and be content with such things as we have. Grasping for new, better, or what someone else has is covetous. We need to turn our hearts away from things and instead turn our hearts toward the word of God. Let the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ fill your heart. Let it fill your heart until every time you share with someone your faith it will come right out of your mouth. Jesus Christ is Lord. He died on the cross for our sins. He was buried, and then he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He intercedes for us. He is coming back again. He will rapture the church. He will return to the earth and establish his kingdom upon this earth for a thousand years and then all will be complete when the New Jerusalem arrives from God out of heaven.

We have a lot to look forward to in God's plan. Let us pursue the doctrine of godliness and exhort one daily while it is still today. The night is coming but it will only last a short while. Then the new morning will arrive and we will be with Jesus forever and ever.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Why do people want to be rich? Most likely because they want to be in control and independent of other people. Most people do not want to be under anyone else. Most people do not want to be told what to do or how to live their life. How do people think they can escape from being underneath other people? By having more money, having more power, having more influence. Sadly, this is deception. Paul said those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. Yet people still work their entire lives for money, position, power, influence, and it is only at the end do they realize, like Solomon, how empty and vain it is.

I've heard people say they do not love money but still want money so they can do more good in the world. I've heard Christians say they don't love money but they want to be rich so they can do more good. This is a subtle deception. The only way to escape these deceiving spirits is to stick with what the Bible says. If any man desires to be rich he will fall into temptation. He will fall into a snare. He will fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction. Do we think we are spiritually strong enough to go against the plain, written word of God and somehow escape what it says? Do we think our motives are really so pure? Do we really think we are more spiritual than other people, or that we have better motives than other people? If you want to be rich and God keeps you poor it is because he loves you and knows you would destroy yourself with that money.

There are people today who have erred from the faith. They listen to false preachers who twist God's word into saying we should pursue money and wealth so we can do more good for ourselves and others. These are deceiving, lying spirits in the church. They have corrupted an entire generation of believers in these last days. This is the generation of believers who "confess" they are rich but they are really the lukewarm Laodicean church the Lord warned about that he would spit out of his mouth.

Having more money is not the answer. Having more of Jesus is the answer. What did Jesus himself say about money? Let us go back and quote the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he said about money and riches. Read **Matthew 13:22, Matthew 19:23, Matthew 19:24, Mark 4:19, Mark 10:23-25, Luke 1:53, Luke 6:24, Luke 8:14.**

Can a rich man be saved? With God all things are possible. However, what happened to the rich man who got saved? What happened to Zacchaeus after he was saved? He gave it away! He would rather be poor and with Jesus than hold onto the money he had. Read **Psalms 37:16, Proverbs 15:16.**

Only a foolish man will pursue money and wealth in this life when we have the plain teaching from Jesus that we should instead be storing up treasures in heaven. Everything here will be gone one day. Everything will die and fade away on earth. But the true treasures that will last forever is our investment in God's kingdom. Those who give of their resources for God's kingdom are investing in the only future that will count for eternity. Don't underestimate the deceitfulness of your heart when it comes to money and riches. Seek God's kingdom first. Do not seek after money, power, and treasure in this present world. Seek God's kingdom and his righteousness. God will provide for your needs and he will protect you.

Go back and read the story about the rich man and Lazarus. Who was the man who was in hell? Who was the man in heaven? Take it to heart. If Jesus said the rich man was in hell and the poor man was in

heaven there is a reason he said this. Don't think you are more spiritual than other people or somehow can escape the plain, written words of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will not escape the truth.

Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Let us humble our hearts. Let us repent of being covetous and loving self more than loving the Lord. Let us repent of self, sin, Satan, this world. Ask God to open your eyes so you will not be deceived by your own heart and pride.

1 Timothy 6:11-12

There are things a man of God should flee. No matter how spiritual you think you are you cannot fight some things. You cannot beat some things. You have to run. You have to get away from some things. In this context, what are those things Paul told Timothy to run away from? Paul told Timothy to run as fast as he can away from that attitude of covetousness. He is telling Timothy to flee from the love of money.

What is the love of money? It is a desire to be independent of other people and to have control over the lives of other people. What does money represent? It is power over others and independence from others. It is the exact opposite of what a Christian is supposed to be. That is why you flee from the love of money. This is why it is the root of all evil. The love of money is a fundamental watershed and separation between the lovers of the world system and those who love God. There can be no mixture. These principles of life are in complete opposition to one another.

Christians who desire to be rich and fool themselves into thinking that it is only so they can "help" people are deluding themselves. Scripture says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? You cannot know it. I can't know it.

We cannot trust our best intentions or motives. We need to run away from what the Bible says to run away from. What are we, instead, to follow after? What are we to pursue? We are to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**.

Peter also exhorted us to grow in character in faith, and make this our focus instead of pursuing worldly goals of position and power. Read **2 Peter 1:5-8**.

The good fight is to follow after the Lord. We should focus on believing the gospel and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.

1 Timothy 6:13-16

What stands out to me in these verses is the phrase "*until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*". There is a future event which will happen. It is already on God's calendar. This event will be what the Bible calls the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth from heaven. The first time Jesus was on the earth it was as a lowly Savior riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. The second time Jesus returns it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords. Paul was not the

only one who saw this in the future. The apostle John also recorded these future events for us in the book of Revelation. He saw the Lord Jesus returning on clouds of glory riding on a white horse.

These are not stories. These are not metaphors. These are actual events that have yet to take place but will certainly come to pass in time. The Lord Jesus will return to this earth to execute judgment and to set up his kingdom on this planet. For 2,000 years Christians have prayed, "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" This prayer will be answered. The Lord Jesus will return to earth. He will sit on his throne over all the nations of earth. He will rule all the nations of earth. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

1 Timothy 6:17-21

Paul continued his earlier thought about people who were rich in this world. Paul charged Timothy to teach them to give their money away and not to trust in money but in the living God who provides for us.

How do we demonstrate we no longer trust in money but instead trust in God? By giving our resources towards helping other people. He instructed Timothy to teach wealthy people to be rich in good works and distribute their wealth and give it away. By doing this they could have true riches which wait for us in heaven. This is in agreement with the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Jesus told the rich young ruler to give away everything and follow him. When Zacchaeus came to faith in Jesus he gave away his money. Look for this as a sign that someone is truly converted when they no longer value what this world values but instead learn to trust in God as provider, protector, and portion.

Paul's final word to Timothy was one we need to hear in our time. Do not pay attention to false knowledge or science. Prideful society and the world system created alternative realities which people put their trust in. They call it science, or "knowledge", but it is lies. There is enough correct information in modern science that people are deceived by the rest of it. This is how the enemy works. He tells enough truth that people will accept his bag of lies and tricks.

Paul's final word for Timothy was to receive the grace of God. This is what we need daily. We need God's grace daily to restore our soul and spirit and to keep us on the road of eternal life.

The Second Epistle to Timothy

2 Timothy Chapter 1

2 Timothy 1:1-2

Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. It was not Paul's will to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. It was Paul's will to hunt down, kill, and persecute Christians everywhere he could find them. But it was God's will for Paul to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and so that is what he became. Have you ever stopped to wonder what is God's will for your life? Have you ever thought you might want to cooperate with God's plan for your life? Do you know your purpose? Do you know why you are here and what you are supposed to accomplish on this earth? Start reading the Bible and it will become clear if you humble yourself and believe the gospel.

God promised eternal life if we believe in his son Jesus Christ. Those who choose not to believe and trust in Jesus will stand before God and give an account for all their evil deeds and evil works. They will be unable to pay back the debt of sin they owe to justice. As a result, they will be separated from God throughout all eternity. They will exist in agony, in darkness, in flames, in regret, in pain, in constant fear and anguish. There is no end to the lake of fire. No one has to go there. People choose to go there rather than humble themselves and believe in God. They would rather suffer than bow their knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. God promises us eternal life for just one thing in return. He wants us to trust him. He wants us to believe in the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day.

Life is found in Jesus. Eternal life, heaven, joy, happiness, and peace is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a free gift. God offers forgiveness of our sins. He offers us eternal life if we will believe in his son Jesus Christ. How could anyone walk away from this offer? They walk away because they do not believe. They do not believe because they think they are smarter than the Bible. They think they know better than thousands of years of people who put their trust in the scriptures. What kind of pride is that? It is the same pride that Lucifer had when God cast him down. It is the pride that says we will be our own god. It is the pride of self worship. It is the root of idolatry. Unbelief.

Paul wrote to his son in the faith. Paul was involved in bringing this young man Timothy to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul instructed him and taught him to serve others by preaching the gospel. He taught Timothy that Christ died for his sins. He taught him that Christ was buried. He taught him that Christ rose from the dead on the third day.

Timothy was Paul's dearly beloved son. I can feel emotion in these words. Here is a relationship of a father and son. Paul loved Timothy like a father loves a son. He wanted to pass on to Timothy all that God gave him. That is in all of us, isn't it? We want to pass down something of ourselves to those who come after us. We don't want to leave this world until we have given away something to those we leave behind. We want to impart something that will help others, bless others, and enable them to walk the road toward heaven we walked.

I can feel that longing to give to others. I can feel the desire to pass down to a son something that I have in my heart. May God use these words, my fishes and loaves, to feed others. May he break these words into many pieces so that others will be blessed, and fed, and nourished, and encouraged in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:3-5

There is a depth of emotion in Paul's relationship with Timothy. This relationship was founded on their mutual faith in the Lord and Paul's consistent prayers for Timothy. The more he prayed for Timothy the closer they became. Depth in relationships are always founded on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and prayer for one another. These are the friendships we miss today because it is rare to find someone with a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus. And then even if you do find someone like this it is difficult to cultivate this relationship. It takes time. It takes prayer for that person.

Notice Timothy's faith did not spring out of thin air. There was a history of faith with his mother and his grandmother. This is the same with my story. I did not come to know the Lord on my own. I had a mother who shared her faith in Jesus. I had a teacher in high school who led Bible studies before and

after school. I met Christians when I worked who pointed me to the Lord Jesus by their actions, words, and attitudes. God put people in my path to stop me from living for self and turned me toward living for Christ. We need other Christians to help us grow in our faith. A community of believers is vitally important to spiritual growth for every Christian. Sadly, it is becoming more difficult to find a community of faith these days.

I wonder why Timothy cried? Paul remembered his tears. Perhaps Timothy cried when Paul had to move on with his ministry. Paul never forgot Timothy though. He continued to disciple, train, and teach Timothy even if it was only through letters. Thank God for this letter from Paul to Timothy that was preserved. There is so much to learn in this personal letter.

Paul's joy in life was helping others grow in faith in the Lord Jesus. He prayed for people to know Christ and to grow in their faith in Christ. Timothy was one that Paul invested his life and time into. He provided us with a good example of how we help others. We should look for ways to invest in people, even if it is only through writing down our thoughts and feelings.

You never know what your words might accomplish. God's word is not bound, but it will accomplish the purpose for which he sends it forth.

2 Timothy 1:6-10

Timothy received the gift of God when Paul put his hands on him. This is seen in other parts of the New Testament, in the book of Acts, when the apostles laid hands on people and they received the Holy Spirit. The gift, then, probably pointed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This gift was receiving power from God in order to serve God and witness to others about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gift so one can be effective in the work of the ministry. Without the gift and power of the Holy Spirit it is impossible to reach people with the gospel through preaching. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts". Without the power of the Holy Spirit our words fall to the ground. But when a man is anointed by the power of the Spirit his words can impact others and turn on the spiritual light. Paul instructed Timothy to stir up this gift. How do we stir up the gift of God? We stay in God's word, stay in prayer, and look for opportunities to share the gospel with other people. In order to share God's word with people we have to overcome our fears which was what Paul addressed next.

It is easy to be afraid and ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus. The gospel is foolishness to those who live in the world system. They will reject the gospel because it challenges everything in the world. It challenges man's pride, independence, his assertion that he provides for himself, protects himself, and worships himself. Instead, it shows us God is our provider, our protector, and that Jesus is our portion. He is the only one who is worthy to be praised.

We are not to praise men or elevate men. The gospel humbles the pride of men. It shows us we are in spiritual darkness, that we are lost, that we are facing God's wrath.

Christ died for our sins. What does this mean? It means we are completely separated from God because we are born evil, perform evil, and accept evil as normal. Human beings know nothing from birth except evil, pride, and independence from their creator. It is a miracle when anyone comes to the understanding they are a sinner.

It is like a fish realizing there is another world besides the one he swims in. How can a fish know there is another world besides the pond he swims in? He must be pulled out by the fisherman and made to see there is another world, and then he gets thrown back into the pond. But he will never forget that experience of seeing trees, grass, a blue sky, and the look of the face of that fisherman. He'll never forget the face of that fisherman. That is what it is like when a man has his spiritual eyes opened to see the face of God in Jesus Christ.

Now imagine being that fish and going back to the bottom of the pond to tell other fish that there is another world they have never seen? That is what it is like to be a Christian in this world.

There are afflictions when we participate in the work of sharing the gospel with others. The afflictions come because people won't believe us. Sometimes we find someone who is desperate or willing to take a chance and they will swim close to the surface of the pond with us and get a glimpse of the other side. Maybe they will even get caught by the fisherman and get a chance to look in his face as well. If they do, they will never be the same. They will go back into the pond with us and will know we told them the truth about the other side. Convinced by their own experience they will share with the other fish as well and become a participant in the afflictions of the gospel.

What is the gospel? Christ abolished death through his own death, burial, and resurrection. He has brought eternal life to light through the message of the gospel. It is this message we are called on to share. It is a simple message but very easy to forget.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ. Allow him to teach you about the kingdom of God. Let the words of the Lord Jesus fill your heart today.

2 Timothy 1:11-12

Paul restated his calling and vocation. God called him and appointed him to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher. He added here specifically that he was sent to the Gentiles, which was the pattern in the book of Acts which recorded Paul's missionary journeys. Paul was definitely God's apostle to the Gentile world. He said, however, in Romans 1 that the gospel went to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. Paul always tried to reach the Jews first in whatever town or city he went to and when they rejected the gospel he turned his attention to the Gentile population.

Paul suffered because he was a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. He suffered persecution from the Jewish world and also from Gentiles who rejected his message. He specifically stated here that his suffering came as a result of God appointing him this specific task of proclaiming the gospel. The same is true of us today. Anyone who obeys the Lord in sharing the gospel with others will suffer. It is a promise in God's word. Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Jesus said that the servant was not greater than his master. If they persecuted and killed Jesus then those who followed Jesus would certainly receive the same treatment from the world.

The religious and secular world is united against the Lord Jesus and those who follow him. They are united in a world system which is a counterfeit of God's Kingdom. In the world system everyone worships self, protects self first, and provides for self first. In God's kingdom it is the opposite. God is our portion, he is our protector, and he is our provider.

There is a problem with Christians in being ashamed of the gospel. Paul addressed this with Timothy, but it is something everyone should take to heart. It is easy to become ashamed of God's word, the gospel, and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be alert to how easy you can betray the Lord Jesus by not sharing the gospel with others. Be alert to how easy it is to go along and get along with the attitude of the world system and the people around us. This is why it is important to stay immersed in God's word and prayer. Stay in the word. Stay in prayer. Be alert. Think about your attitudes, words, and reactions to people in situations. Train yourself to have the same attitude as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul pointed again to "*that day*". He was confident that the Lord would preserve him and keep him until that day. What is that day? It is the day of the Lord. It is the day when every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and have their life reviewed by the Lord. May God help us to cultivate the ability to live every day in view of the judgment seat of Christ. May we cultivate in our heart the fear of the Lord and live in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

The Lord gave something to Timothy when Paul put his hands on him. After reading Acts and other letters of Paul it is not difficult to figure out that Timothy was filled with the Holy Spirit and received spiritual gifts from God. This occurred when Paul put his hands on Timothy. This is called "*laying on of hands*". This is also mentioned in **Acts 8:18, 1 Timothy 4:14, and Hebrews 6:2**.

John the Baptist said he baptized people with water, but the Lord Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

The baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit is given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Men do not give this to us. At times the Lord does this when men of God put their hands on people. It is not the men, however, nor a power of men, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

Paul told Timothy to "*hold fast*" and "*keep by the Holy Ghost*". These exhortations demonstrate the believer is to cooperate and work with the Holy Spirit to keep spiritual gifts moving in the believer's life. We are to exercise ourselves to godliness. Peter taught that we are to "add to our faith". There is some exertion on the part of the believer in growing spiritually and maintaining the gifts and calling God gave us.

We should not be like Samson who took the gifts of God, the anointing, for granted, and then one day he lost his anointing when he needed it the most.

Above all else, guard your hearts, for it is the wellspring of life. We must guard and protect our spirit from the evil influence in the world.

Get in the word of God. Ready, study, memorize, and meditate on the word of God. We need to be filled with the Spirit continually.

The Lord Jesus is returning soon. **Luke 21:36**, "*Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.*"

2 Timothy 1:15-18

I've often stopped here and thought about what was taking place. Paul was warning Timothy about certain individuals, and he was commending a man and his house. Why was this? Why would Paul warn Timothy about certain individuals and also commend a specific man and his house.

I've heard that Christians are not supposed to talk about people. This is considered gossip or slander. But what is happening here? Is this gossip? Is this slander? Evidently not because it would not be in the Bible if this communication was gossip or slander. So there is a time when we need to communicate information about specific people. This is not the only example in Paul's letters where he did this. He called people out by name in several places. In **Romans 16** he listed almost everyone in an entire church in Rome.

Sometimes it is right and appropriate to warn people about dangerous individuals, and especially people who are purposely harming the church. This is why I see no problem in calling out false teachers and preachers by their name. They should be rebuked publicly for leading God's people astray. It is important that we warn our brothers and sisters in Christ about dangerous people by name. Point them out. Mark them and warn the brothers and sisters to steer clear of dangerous people.

Also, we need to speak well of those who do well. We need to honor God's servants who are faithful and do good works. We should commend them so that people will know those who are faithful and trustworthy. As much as it is important to warn about dangerous people, it is also important to commend good people.

Some of the people I have personally been encouraged and blessed by in the past have been: Dave Hunt, David Wilkerson, Chuck Smith, Corrie ten Boom, Richard Wurmbrand, Elisabeth and Jim Elliot, and Chuck Missler. These are well known public figures in Christian church history and you can easily find out information about their work, teaching, and ministries.

Others I would warn people to stay away from are Benny Hinn, Paul and Jan Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, and others who preach the heresy of the prosperity gospel or the positive confession gospel.

2 Timothy Chapter 2

2 Timothy 2:1-2

Paul taught Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. How can someone be strong in grace? How can someone obtain grace from God? The Bible tells us exactly how to get grace from God. The Bible teaches us that God gives grace to the humble but he resists the proud. So in order to be strong in grace we must humble our heart before God and agree with God that he is the way, the truth, and the life. What God recorded in the Bible is the truth. My opinions, feelings, and thoughts are not truth. The only truth to be found is in scripture, recorded for us in the Holy Bible. To think we are smarter than the Bible is to show pride. If we show pride then God will not give grace but instead he will show his wrath. He will resist us. How does God resist someone? He takes his hand off their life. When God takes his hand off a person's life this might mean they get a lot more power in the world system. I've seen people who were under God's wrath get a lot of money and resources and position in

the world system. It was evidence of God's wrath on their life. If God showed grace to that individual they would be humble, but instead they were proud. They were proud of their intellectualism, their position in the world system, and how much money they could accumulate. It was a sign of God's wrath on them.

How are we strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus? We must humble ourselves like Jesus humbled himself. Jesus humbled himself so far down he didn't have a place to lay his head. He humbled himself so much he was obedient to death, and not just any death, but the death of crucifixion. That death is one of the most humiliating ways a human being could die. But Jesus did it for us. He died in our place. He died on the cross for us so we would not have to die and go to hell.

Paul taught Timothy to take what he received from Paul and give it other men who would be faithful to pass it down to others. Paul was already thinking about his spiritual grandchildren. He knew that the Lord Jesus started this church and it would go on without him. He wanted to make sure that everything God gave to him by way of revelation was passed to others. I feel a similar urgency in my heart. I want to make sure that everything I learned from the Lord I give to others and that it can be passed to anyone who will hear, believe, and receive the truth. May the Lord take these words and use them to feed others and nourish others in their walk of faith with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:3-7

This is one of the places where the Bible exhorts us to consider something. I stop right here when reading 2 Timothy and wondered what is the message I should get from these verses. What was Paul asking Timothy to consider? He was talking about what it takes to be a good soldier. He was talking about what it takes to compete as an athlete. He was talking about how to be productive farmer. What was the underlying message? In all of these professions the person who was successful had focus. The person must remove things from his life. He must train himself and be disciplined. I think the take away is that the Christian in order to be fruitful and productive and to finish well must live a life of focus and discipline. It requires us to make priorities in our life.

In the world system people know how to set goals in order to achieve position, prestige, and money. They identify the steps they have to take in order to climb the ladder to be successful and receive rewards. What do we need to do as a Christian in order to be fruitful, productive, and finish well?

The basic goals we make include staying in God's word. How much are we reading the Bible? Every day? And when we do read the Bible is our mind wandering or do we think about what we are reading? When is the last time you memorized a Bible verse? Do you think about putting scripture to work in your life by finding out how it relates to your every day life situations? When is the last time you made it a goal to obey a simple Bible verse? This is just the beginning. Don't say you can't do it. Go back and read **Philippians 4:13**. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Once we read the Bible it should change our goals. Our goal is no longer money, power, prestige, and position. Our goal should be the same as Jesus Christ. What was his goal? His goal was to lay his life down at Calvary so that we could receive eternal life. Is this our goal? Is our goal to give our life toward helping other people come to the saving knowledge of the gospel? How can we prove this is our goal in life? What actions have you taken to put this into practice? Where is the evidence in your life that you even care if people go to heaven? See where I'm getting to? Consider what I say. The Lord give you understanding in all things.

2 Timothy 2:8-9

What is Paul's gospel? It is a straight forward message, and it is good news for everyone who hears, receives, and believes. What is the gospel? Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He died on the cross for our sins and he was buried. On the third day he was raised from the dead.

Paul underlined the identity of Jesus Christ as being of the seed of David. This part pointed back to the promise made to David, but the promise of the "seed" went all the way back to the Garden of Eden when God said that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. (**Genesis 3:15**).

This is exactly what Jesus Christ accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. He destroyed the work of the devil. (**Colossians 2:15**). He overcame death, hell, and the grave. (**1 Corinthians 15:55-57**). All those who hear, believe, and receive the gospel are placed into Christ by God the Father. In other words, what Christ did is accounted to us as well. He became sin in our place so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. **2 Corinthians 5:21**, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

God has done all of this for us. It is his work, and not our work. He did all the work for us. Now, our part, or our "work" is to believe in his Son that he sent into the world.

John 6:29, *"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."*

It is by believing the gospel that we enter the secret place with the Lord. We find entrance into God's house where we can have fellowship with him. When we enter the secret place with the Lord he becomes our provision, protection, and portion. We have nothing to fear anymore. The Lord is everything we need to live. We learn in the desert that he is the bread of life and he is the living waters. Everything in this life we need he is the answer to it all. He is the bread of life. He is the living waters. He is our home and our place of rest.

Paul suffered because of his testimony of the gospel and so shall we. However, no matter what happens God's word shall prevail and overcome. Let us stay on the side of God's word. Remain on the side of victory forever.

2 Timothy 2:10-13

Paul was important in God's plan to bring salvation to the world. There would be no salvation without the finished and completed work of Christ. God chose Paul to preach the gospel. He became a partaker in the work of the gospel. As a result, Paul was persecuted and suffered because he was a faithful preacher of the gospel. When he suffered he had a choice. Do I give up? Or do I endure? Paul chose the road of endurance and perseverance. What would have happened if Paul gave up? Would most of the New Testament be missing today?

Each of us are important in God's plan. Paul was important but so is every person who receives the Lord Jesus Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ and hold a special place in this time. Our part is important in building the church God planned. There may be only one person God will use us to reach with the gospel, but every person is important to God. We are important to him. We are vital to his plan and to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul endured so others would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He endured so others would hear the gospel and be saved. Salvation is in Christ Jesus. There is no other salvation. There is no other hope for mankind outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul quoted a faithful saying. It almost sounds like something that could be found in a hymn book. Maybe this was a song in the early church? If we be dead with him we shall also live with him. How can we be dead with him? When Christ died on the cross we also died with him. God counts the work of Christ on our behalf. When we believe the gospel we become part of what happened at Calvary. God places us in Christ Jesus. We died with him. We were buried with him. We were raised to new life in Christ Jesus. Romans 6 outlines this for us. This is the revelation of the gospel which God gave to the apostle Paul and which he gave to us through his preaching and the recording of his epistles. We died with Christ. We were buried with Christ. We arose from the dead with Christ. This is the work of God from first to last. You don't have to understand it. You just have to believe it.

Suffering with Christ. This means we believed the gospel and then gave it to others and we pay for this by being persecuted, slandered, and cast out. The more we participate in the gospel the more we suffer. But what is the promise? If we suffer with him we will reign with him. A time will come when Christ Jesus will return to this earth and establish his kingdom. He will reign over all the nations. And those who have suffered with him will reign with him.

It is possible for people to deny Christ but he will never deny himself. He cannot deny himself. Even if we lose faith it does not change the facts. The Lord Jesus will never change. The reality of who he is and what he has done does not hinge on our faith. The reality is the reality. If we believe we will benefit. If we don't believe then we will lose in the long run. We have a choice. Will we trust Jesus? Will we believe his word? Your reaction to Jesus does not change who Jesus is, but it will show the world who you are and where you will spend eternity.

2 Timothy 2:14

Paul instructed Timothy to put the church in remembrance of certain things. What are these things? What have we covered so far? Christians will suffer in this world. It is a normal part of the Christian life to suffer with Christ and for the gospel. Also, we should remember the promise that if we suffer with Christ we will also reign with him. Don't be afraid to suffer for the sake of Christ and the gospel. We are to strive to teach people the word of God to make sure that the truth in scripture is passed down to the next generation of believers. This has happened for 2,000 years and will not stop until all God's promises are fulfilled. Find people who are faithful that you can invest in who will carry on the ministry of preaching the gospel.

To be fruitful and productive as a Christian requires discipline and focus. We have to remember that in order to succeed in the work of the ministry we must discipline ourselves and be focused. Paul gave the example of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Fruitfulness and finishing well require us to put forth effort and work with the Lord. We need to cooperate with the Lord and show up every day. The Lord will give us the grace we need to get the job done.

Also, we need endurance. Don't give up after a short time, but think in terms of a life long commitment. Pace yourselves so that you can finish the race. We will need to cultivate patience and endurance. We

will face hard times, but God will give us grace to endure through those hard times so that we can finish our course and be fruitful along the way.

After putting people in remembrance of these instructions we need to correct people who strive over words. I've met this kind of person before. They like to pick fights in Sunday School class over side issues and derail the entire Sunday School lesson so that the teacher cannot finish his lesson but has to deal with this one unruly student while everyone sits by in frustration. The purpose of the disruption and striving is so that people will be cheated out of hearing the truth in God's word. The purpose is to subvert the hearers in the class. The enemy will even use well-meaning but ignorant Christians to subvert others so that people cannot hear God's word being taught. Think of how many times you've seen sermons or Sunday School lessons get sidelined by one or two unruly people in a class or congregation. This is the devil at work through ignorant Christians.

You don't think the devil can work through someone in church or someone who claims to be a Christian? Then why did Jesus rebuke Peter and say "get thee behind me Satan"? Because the devil was talking through Peter's ignorance. There are a lot of ignorant people in churches who destroy and tear down more than they help in building the faith of others in the church.

Don't be one of those who tear down but instead have a quiet attitude of wanting to learn and listen to the word of God being taught in Sunday School or in church.

2 Timothy 2:15

People should be ashamed if they attempt to share the gospel and cannot give a biblical presentation of what they are talking about. Paul's exhortation was to study so we can show ourselves approved to God. We should not be ashamed but correctly handle God's word.

Some Bible doctrine enthusiasts make much of the "rightly dividing" to imply we must divide scripture into time periods in order to have a correct understanding of what the Bible says. There may be some truth in that but I've seen people take the idea too far. The context of this verse is correctly handling God's word, and not "*dividing*" God's word. The King James English can get us sidetracked here if we let it. Dividing God's word means to be able to "discern" or correctly explain or understand the message of the gospel.

We need to study so we can have a good conscience toward God when we share his word. It is a shame when someone preaches the word of God and is not prepared. It is easy to pick someone out who has not studied. They go off their topic pretty fast and run down rabbit trails and never make any solid point. We need to make a clear point when we share God's word, and that point is this: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

How does this apply to our lives? God justified us, he sanctifies us, and he will glorify us. When I read Paul's letter I see that he applies the gospel over and over in various ways. Our foundation is Christ Jesus. Don't build on this foundation with modern philosophy, psychology, or self-help. The gospel is not about having a better life in the here and now but is about preparing our soul for God's kingdom.

There is a progressive revelation in scripture of who God is and God's plan for us. There are different time periods in which God revealed himself more clearly. There are three periods (or days): Israel, the church, and the nations. We begin at Israel, arrive in the church, and then in the last day Christ rules

over the nations. There are three days. This is reflected in many ways in the Bible. Consider the different roles in scripture of prophet, priest, and king. Consider Israel, the church, and the nations. Consider that in the ark there was the law, Aaron's staff that budded, and the golden pot of hidden manna. Three in one. All of this reveals who God is. God reveals himself to us in different ways over time. The perfect revelation of God is Jesus Christ. He is the express image of God. When we see Jesus we see God.

God has a plan for Israel, for the church, and for the nations. In every one of God's three days men are saved in the same way: through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was always a remnant in each day that believed the gospel and put their trust in Jesus. The remnant are those who overcome. They abide in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Why the third day? Because there are three days. Israel, the church, and the nations. Prophet, priest, and king. Consider this. Think about it. May the Lord reveal who he is. May he show us more of himself. There is nothing else that can compare with hearing the voice of the Lord speaking to a man.

2 Timothy 2:16-18

How can we define profane and vain babbling? The text helps us define what Paul means by profane and vain babbling. Two men, whom Paul named, taught a doctrine that the resurrection was past. This counts as a profane and vain babbling. If this is a profane and vain babbling imagine how Paul would describe what men spout from pulpits today! I think we are probably beyond profane and vain babblings and in outright doctrines of demons pouring out of pulpits and through airwaves and across the internet.

How do we deal with this? Paul's answer was clear and concise. We shun these teachings. In today's world this means don't watch it on TV or listen on your mobile device. Switch the radio station and quit listening to false teaching on the radio. Most of what is on the airwaves today is from the prince of the power of the air. Who is that? The devil. The devil is the prince of the power of the air. Most of what is transmitted by radio, TV, and Internet is doctrines of demons. It is God's grace that any of us have knowledge of the truth left in today's world. It will get worse the closer we get to the end of the age.

Paul made a terrifying statement in these verses: "*overthrow the faith of some*". What does that mean? Does it mean a man can lose his salvation? I don't think that was in view but I think what Paul said was that someone, even a Christian, can be deceived by false teaching. They can become unfruitful, barren, and even do harm to others. They can become a serious stumbling block and may even prevent people from coming to faith in the gospel. Imagine how hard it must be for the average person today listening to Christian television to even hear a message which will bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ. What does a person need to know to be saved? They need to know they are a sinner and need a Savior. How can a man know he needs a doctor unless he first knows he is sick? Is this message preached on "Christian" TV and radio any more? You would have to look hard to find men who preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and why it is important that Christ died for our sins. He took our place. Do you know why he took your place? You probably won't find the answer to that question on Christian TV and radio.

The only hope is a grass roots revival which preaches the basic gospel consistently and fervently. It needs to be expressed in a way people can easily understand it. It should not be watered down so that

people do not clearly see the severity of our condition and the amazing grace of God demonstrated by Christ dying on the cross in our place.

The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. He arose from the dead three days later. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ is God the Son. He is fully man. He is fully God. He is equal but distinct from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. God is three in one. He is prophet, priest, and king. He expresses himself through Israel, the church, and the nations. He is doing this in three acts and then all will be complete with the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

2 Timothy 2:19

Ask someone if they are a Christian, and they may reply, "Yes, I am a Christian." They might add to this: "My grandfather was a preacher". Or they might say, "Yes, I am an American." However, it is doubtful they really are a Christian.

Let us rephrase the question. "Do you know the Lord?" They will reply, "Oh yes, I know the Lord." To this they may add, "My parents took me to Sunday School when I was a child."

What does this mean? I still do not know if this person is a Christian or if they know the Lord.

So, what is the correct question to ask someone? Ask this question instead: "Does the Lord know you?"

There is only one way a person can know the answer. The only way you can know if the Lord knows who you are is if you have heard God's voice. If a person is truly a Christian then they will hear God's voice, and they will have the testimony in their heart that God knows them, loves them, and died on the cross for them. True Christians don't have to be told this. They know Jesus died for them. They know it in their heart. They know God knows who they are. Jesus knows their name.

However, if someone is not a Christian and you ask them this question they will look at you like you are crazy. Does God know who I am? As soon as you get that look of ridicule or irritation rest assured: you're dealing with someone who is not born again.

The Lord knows those who are his. The person who belongs to Jesus knows this.

Here is another way you can look at someone and tell they belong to Jesus. Look at their life. Do they live in continual sin? Do they live in continual, unrepentant sin? Do they have any sorrow over their sin? Do they try to live a holy life? Those who belong to Jesus will at least try to stay away from sin. They will try to depart from iniquity. A person who has no conscience about living a lifestyle of sin is probably not a born again Christian.

What does it matter if we know people are Christians or not? It will matter in the last days because there will be a lot of people who pretend to be religious but are used by the devil to lead people away from the gospel.

The gospel is this: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead. (1 **Corinthians 15:1-4**).

When you attend church listen closely and see if you ever hear, even once, the Pastor say this from the pulpit. How often does he say this from the pulpit? Does he preach the gospel?

If he never preaches the gospel then you are probably sitting under someone who may not be a Christian. Run! Run from dead churches with spiritually dead Pastors! Run! Flee! These places are full of evil spirits and demons.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

These verses are a good example of what I call the doctrine of the overcomer. I see a pattern in the Bible where there is one house but two different types of people in that house. In the house of Adam there was Cain and Abel. In the house of Abraham there was Ishmael and Isaac. In the house of Isaac there was Esau and Jacob. In the house of Israel there were the brothers against one brother who became their savior. Do you see the pattern? In the house of Israel there was King Saul and King David. Throughout the entire Bible there is this contrast between those who are of the flesh and those who are of the Spirit. Those who are of the flesh seem to always come first, and those who are of the Spirit come later. The flesh is first and then the Spirit. The man of the flesh persecutes and tries to kill the man of the Spirit. This story of the great house goes on and on until the Lord Jesus Christ arrives. He came to his own but his own received him not. Everyone who did receive him he gave them the power to become the sons of God.

There are three days in God's plan. In each one of the three days there are three houses. The first house was Israel. The second house was the church. The third house will be the king reigning over the nations. In each of these houses there is a spiritual remnant of true believers in the Messiah. They are a spiritual minority who exist in the great house. These are the vessels of honor who have purged themselves of the flesh and who are meet for the master's use. They are the ones who are prepared for every good work.

From my understanding of the Bible Jesus taught the same thing. He showed us a contrast between two types of virgins. He said there were ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. This is the same contrast throughout the Bible between those of the flesh and those of the spirit. There are two in one house. There are two groups within one context or house. This is a pattern in the Bible. There were eleven good disciples and one Judas. There is a contrast between Martha and Mary in the Bible, between the one who works, and the one who rests in Christ. This story has happened from the beginning.

The vessel of honor believer are those who rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. They abide in the righteousness of Christ. They put no confidence in themselves or their works. All our righteousness is filthy rags. But the man who trusts in the Lord Jesus receives righteousness from God by faith in Jesus. This contrast between the man of the flesh and the man of the Spirit happens right now in the church. It will continue until the end.

One will be taken and the other one will be left behind. Let us watch and pray so that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

2 Timothy 2:22-23

Paul taught Timothy what to flee and what to avoid. In spiritual warfare, much like physical warfare, when fighting there are times avoid the enemy. What are the traps the enemy sets for the Christian? Youthful lust is one trap to flee. What are youthful lusts then? **Definition from Webster:** *To have an eager, passionate, and especially an inordinate or sinful desire, as for the gratification of the sexual appetite or of covetousness; 1913 Webster.*

Paul recognized that one problem with young people is sexual lust. He told Timothy to flee youthful lusts. Sex before marriage will destroy a man's potential for serving God in ministry. This is not a matter of forgiveness. It is a matter of a man's character. A man who wants to serve God in the gospel must renounce sexual lust. This is plain, simple, and straightforward. Paul did not go into detail; he just stated it plainly and went on to tell Timothy what he should do. He instructed him to follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace. We cannot serve God alone. We cannot grow spiritually on our own. We must pursue these qualities in the company of others who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

There are stupid questions. I don't know how many times I've heard the proverb that no question is a stupid question. But there are stupid questions. The Christian who is serving in the gospel should avoid foolish and unlearned questions. Why? Because this is a snare and a trap of the devil to tarnish the proclamation of the gospel. Instead of contradicting God's word being taught the person used by an evil spirit will keep bringing up stupid questions. They will keep distracting a group of learners away from the teacher's subject and on to some non-essential topic that has no bearing on what is being taught. I've experienced this first hand as a teacher, and I've also seen this happening in other Bible classes I have attended. There is always somebody in the class whom the devil will use to ask foolish and unlearned questions in order to stop people from hearing the truth.

How do you avoid this? One simple way I found is to thank the person for asking a question, and then just ignore it and go right on teaching my subject. If they try to interrupt then politely ask them to see you after the class if it is really something important. This sometimes works but the enemy can even use this to get people's mind focused on the drama unfolding in front of them. Sometimes the best answer is no answer. Simply ignore the person interrupting the class and keep right on with your subject. People may think you are rude and of course that is exactly what the devil is trying to do. He wants to get people focused on the messenger instead of the message you are trying to convey. Best pray up and ask God to bind every devil that will try to stop the class from going forward but realize it is real spiritual warfare that is taking place every single time you open a Bible to teach or share with someone else.

Ignore the "who was Cain's wife" questions and keep right on moving.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

I got in trouble one time with a student. I was rude to him. I acknowledged I was wrong and apologized. However, I was not satisfied with apologizing. I wanted to change. I memorized the definition of gentleness, and while studying found this verse.

Paul told us the servant of the Lord must not strive. What does this mean? We don't argue with people who disagree with us. Arguing is not part of teaching God's word. Some people think debating is part of persuading people to believe the gospel. They call it apologetics. I think we should study information

and logic that help support our faith, but ultimately it is God's word that convicts the conscience of a man and not logic. We put too much hope in our intellect in today's world. We think if we are clever we can reason a person into believing the truth. However, I don't believe it works like that. Smart people know the truth and choose not to agree with it. They make a conscious choice to agree with lies and false science. This is not an intellectual problem. This is a heart problem.

The heart cannot be reasoned with. It must be struck with spiritual power and penetrated with a bolt of God's word. I find sometimes quoting a Bible verse has more effect than talking someone to death with reason. The servant of the Lord must not strive.

What are we to do? This is when gentleness comes in. Our character and the way we conduct ourselves matters tremendously in sharing God's word. If we are abrasive no one will listen. We must be gentle. This must be genuine gentleness and not fake gentleness. People can tell the difference.

Be apt to teach. Be on the look out for ways to fill in the gaps if a person has a misunderstanding or does not understand the facts in the Bible. Look for ways to teach people by lifestyle, words, and attitude.

When people reject the truth they hurt themselves. They oppose themselves and not you. Everyone is made in God's image and know the truth in the conscience. When they reject the gospel they oppose what their conscience tells them is the truth. They have to work hard at convincing themselves of the lies the world system offers. Something inside men know that the gospel is true. This is why simply proclaiming the gospel can have amazing effects on people, because somehow it rings true and they know it is right. God designed us in such a way to be able to recognize truth when we hear it.

But this does not mean people will accept the truth or the gospel, even if they know it is right. People are determined to worship self instead of worshiping God so they reject his message of reconciliation. They reject the message that they need forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Instead, they chart their own destiny and blaze their own trail. This is the broad road leading men to destruction. Everyone who follows their own opinions winds up alone and in darkness.

Our part is to do our best to help people escape this trap of the devil. Some will escape; many will not.

2 Timothy Chapter 3

2 Timothy 3:1-5

The "*last days*" is the season of time close to the return of the Lord. The last days is a season of time before Jesus returns to this earth. It is a season of time before the rapture of the church and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

Before the return of Jesus there will be perilous times. It will be a dangerous time. It will be dangerous spiritually and physically. There will be a lot of demonic activity and much deception. People will no longer be able to tell truth from lies. One of the main lies people fall for is that they are "gods". Sadly, this is promoted by most popular TV, radio, and internet mega preachers.

One reason the last days are dangerous is because men love and worship themselves. The tendency for men to worship self is actively promoted. This is something happening right now in society. There are preachers, politicians, and culture influencers who actively promote self worship. This is in the culture of today's psychology, philosophy, religion, technology, and work place. Promotion of self and self worship is taught and embraced everywhere. This world view saturates us today. What is the result of this world view and principle of living?

Paul gave a list of what happens when the predominant attitude is worship of self. Men become covetous. They become boasters, proud, blasphemers, and disobedient to parents. They are unthankful, unholy, and without natural affection. Men are truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, and they despise those that are good. They are traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. In addition to this they adopt a form of spirituality which masks the reality of their depraved character. This spirituality helps them deceive themselves and soothe their conscience. This form of religion, however, will deny the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul told us to turn away from this false religion of self worship. How do we detect it? How can we tell the difference? Listen closely. False religion promotes man's life in the here and now. It promotes self. It is about self-promotion, self-image, and self-improvement. It is about living a good life in the here and now. There is not much in it about heaven or hell or sin. The gospel is turned into a teaching about spiritual laws that we can tap into and benefit ourselves in the here and now. This is man-centered. It is self-centered. It is self worship. It is satanic.

We are living right now in the last days which Paul described. Everything Paul listed is active, accelerating, and growing exponentially in our society, culture, business, and government today. Look around. People are traitors. They are prideful. They boast of their own goodness, their own intelligence, their own abilities. Men are boasters and proud. They are self willed. They are disobedient and subversive. They love pleasure more than they love God. They have a form of spirituality but it has no impact on changing their behavior. Cursing, lies, and deception pour out of their mouths. The poison of the serpent is on their tongue. They are deceived and deceiving everyone around them. Turn away from them.

Instead, meditate on scripture. Stay in the word and stay in prayer. Abide in Christ every day. Remind yourself of the gospel every day. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Put all your faith, trust, hope, and worship in the Lord Jesus Christ. Love the Lord Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Do not love the world or what the world offers. We have to live here now because we are salt and light for God in this world. But this world is not our home. Our home is another place. We have not yet arrived at our real home yet. Our real home is in God's kingdom. Don't love this present world of darkness. It is passing away. Love God and abide in him.

2 Timothy 3:6-9

What does Paul mean by "this sort". He pointed back to the dangerous people he described in the previous verses. Dangerous people are those who worship self and bear the fruit of sin. Sinful people are dangerous people. But even more specifically Paul described a subset of dangerous people who were also religious and used fake spirituality to deceive people. This sort are those who creep into houses. Interesting and descriptive words. What else creeps around in the Bible? Serpents "creep", so by describing this sort as those who "creep into houses" we get a mental picture of a snake slithering in through an open door or window.

These impostors ensnare and trap a specific type of victim. Those trapped by the devil were the ones who were "silly, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts". These victims were ripe to be trapped and ensnared by the devil's schemes. They already gave themselves to a devilish lifestyle and so when the serpent shows up they were willing victims. Notice how busy these women were? They were busy learning things but never come to a knowledge of the truth. They sit in the house reading books on psychology, philosophy, and religion, and yet still cannot comprehend the truth of the gospel. The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ evades them. Why? Because they already devoted themselves to another lifestyle. They were silly, laden with sins, and had divers lusts. No matter how much they try to understand themselves through philosophy or psychology it cannot save them from the trap of the serpent. They are willing victims of the serpent through the decisions they made to pursue pleasure, experiences, and esoteric knowledge.

The men whom the devil used to trap them were compared to Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses. This shows us something basic about false spiritual promoters. They resist the truth of the gospel. They stop people from hearing, receiving, and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Eventually these impostors are exposed for what they are: servants and followers of the devil.

May God help us have to discernment and escape from the trap of the devil. Pray we will receive a love of the truth and so not be deceived by the lies of the serpent.

2 Timothy 3:10-12

Paul used his life as an example for Timothy. He pointed to his doctrine, his manner of life, his purpose, faith, and long suffering. He gave quite a list including afflictions. The idea that afflictions could be proof of someone's Christian character is a foreign concept to modern American Christians who are brainwashed by prosperity propaganda. Paul's life was proof and he offered his life as an example for Timothy to follow. Are we able to do this? Can we tell those whom we teach God's word to follow the example of our life? This is a good question to ask. Let us search our hearts and ask ourselves if our lifestyle helps people come to Christ or drives people away from Christ. Can the people we talk about Jesus with look at our lives and perceive consistency or hypocrisy?

Paul endured afflictions which came to him as a result of preaching the gospel. His afflictions did not come because he had a lack of faith or because of sin, or because he was punished for past sins. All of Paul's sins were laid on the Son of God at Calvary. Everything Paul did was accounted for by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul was an example of God's grace to the worst sinners. He said his life was an example of God's grace. How do people misunderstand these facts and say that Paul suffered afflictions because of sin? People who say this have an agenda they are promoting, a false teaching that Christians should never suffer or be afflicted if they have a certain quantity or quality of faith. This is a false teaching and it confuses people about what faith really is. Read Hebrews 11. Notice they were all commended for their faith but look at the different experiences they had. Some had great victory. Some lived in holes in the ground. But they all were commended for their faith. This blows the prosperity gospel to smithereens.

Let us grow up and see things as they are. Let us grow up and deal with reality as God made it around us. God is in control. Let us learn in whatever situation we are in to be content and to thank God in every circumstance. Let us learn to humble ourselves and acknowledge that we do not have everything figured out. Let us humble ourselves and seek to obey the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:13

In this period of future history (which is more than likely current history) which Paul called "*the last days*", we see in verse 13 another sign. Another sign of the last days is that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Hasn't this happened already? Looking at history we see evil men and seducers who got worse and worse. So there must be something specific about how Paul described this sign. It is an exponential deterioration of truth. It is a time when deception will be so strong and so encompassing that people will no longer know what is true and false. In other words, it is a time of mass media propaganda. It is a time when there is no longer a way to know what is true or false. Everything in the news or media is twisted and slanted and presented with bias and reinterpretation. Are we living in that day? Are we living in a day of mass propaganda and deception? I would say yes. Definitely, yes.

Something I notice in this verse. People who deceive others are themselves also deceived. Telling lies makes you vulnerable to believing the lies of others. Lying changes your perception of reality. You no longer have a stable reference point to interpret what people say and do around you because you are a liar. Liars live daily with a relative, situational ethic mindset. What does this do to that person? It deprives them of the ability to compare and contrast truth and lies. In other words, they are in moral darkness and cannot perceive when others are deceiving them. Lying turns you into easy prey.

Jesus said this very plainly: "*Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a ditch.*" (**Matthew 15:14**)

Also, **Luke 6:39**, "*And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?*"

You can translate "ditch" as pit. A pit of darkness.

I don't know what else I can say to inspire people to flee lies and deception. We should cry out to God to give us a love of the truth. Receive a love of the truth. Love Jesus. Love the truth. Flee from lies and darkness. Do not agree with lies and darkness. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. It changes you and will cause your soul to be lost in darkness. Darkness will isolate you. Feel alone? Feel depressed? You have no idea how bad it will get if you keep on living in lies and deception. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and cry out to him to shine the light of the gospel upon your soul. Pray to God he will deliver you from the darkness that will drag your soul down into the pit. The abyss has no bottom.

Jesus Christ died for our sins upon the cross. He was buried. He rose from the dead three days later. Believe this message and be saved.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

The word "*continue*" stands out to me. We can't just hear and receive and believe, and then stop listening, stop receiving, and stop believing. We must continue. There must be forward momentum. There must be an active, living faith in the living God. A faith that rests on past experiences or confessions is not enough for today or tomorrow. If we will believe tomorrow we must believe today. We must continue in what we have learned and been assured of.

Where do we learn the gospel? Who told us that Jesus died on the cross for us? For me it was people I looked up to at the time. People I respected. People who I felt like I could trust. I did trust them at the time.

Later I learned to put my trust and faith in God's word alone. The scripture does not change. People change, but God's word remains the same. When Paul encouraged Timothy he could point to himself and say "Trust me, Timothy". Why? Because he knew he was not walking away from Jesus. He could exhort Timothy to trust the word he preached to him because he knew his life backed up the message he preached.

Timothy was taught scripture from the time he was a child. He came from a family of faith. His mother and grandmother taught him the Bible. What a blessing it is to have parents who believe in God and will share God's word with their children.

God told parents in scripture to teach the word to their children. **Deuteronomy 11:19**, "*And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*"

Teach children God's word. This is not family devotions around the fire place in the living room. This is a lifestyle of constantly talking about the Lord and his word. This is an active looking for opportunities to point out the truth in God's word to our families. It is a mind that is saturated with God's word and comes out in every situation and makes applications and gives lessons so that children can understand the character and nature of their heavenly Father.

The way children grow up says a lot about the parent. Most people today would rather not face that fact, but instead would rather explain away a child's behavior as being that child's own personality or rebellion. But what does the Bible say? What does scripture say? Forget what culture and society brain wash us with and go back to what the Bible says! The Bible says to train up a child and he when he is older he will not depart from it.

A rebellious child means the parent did not live the word of God. Those parents were religious, but did not walk in the power of the Spirit with the word of God flowing out of them like a fountain. God's word brings life and death. In the mouth of a hypocrite God's word brings spiritual death on people. In the mouth of a man filled with the Holy Spirit the word of God brings spiritual life to people.

Don't be deceived. God's word is the truth and sets us free from the lies of the world around us. Don't believe what the world system and world media tell you. Believe the Bible instead.

The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. Believe the gospel and be saved today.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

There will be people and evil spirits who will come against the Christian in an attempt to discredit the Bible. Scripture is our resource to build ourselves up in our faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Without the Bible we don't have a leg to stand on. So the Bible will be attacked by every person and spirit who is against God and Jesus. They will attack, undermine, ridicule, and call it

into question. They will exalt their own intellect over the Bible. They will try to tear it apart and point out contradictions, errors, or mistakes. Why? Because they do not want to believe in Jesus. Why don't they want to believe in Jesus? Why don't they want to believe in Jesus? Why is it easier to believe in a self-help program, or in Buddha, or in some other false religion than believe in Jesus?

The answer to this is straight forward, but it is impossible for the unbeliever to accept this explanation. They don't believe because they are sinners. Sinners are not able to submit to God or his word. As a result, they look for anything they can find to replace the Bible. This does not change the facts as they are. Men are sinners. The Bible is true. God is still in control.

The only hope is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in the gospel that we find a message of hope that we can be forgiven of our sins and reconciled to God. When we believe the gospel then it is easy to believe the Bible. If I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins, he was buried in a tomb, and rose from the dead on the third day then I should not have a problem believing anything else the Bible says.

Unbelief itself is the definition of sin. Men do not believe in God because they are sinners. If they did believe in God they would be too scared to commit sin. We are at some level denying the existence of God every single time we commit sin. If we believed in God we would avoid sin at all costs because we would automatically know he would hold us accountable for every idle word and every act of disobedience.

The truth is plain. God demands justice and will exact vengeance on every sin which man and Satan have committed. It is true that God loves us and has made a way for us to escape his wrath by believing that His Son paid the price for our sins on Calvary. By believing and receiving the gospel we escape from the wrath of God.

Once I believed the gospel the entire world started to make sense. Truly, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Without the knowledge of God's word men live in darkness. The only light they have is what their own imagination can conceive of. But the human imagination could never conceive the gospel. Only God could have come up with that.

Believe in Jesus. Be saved. This is so simple a child can do this and be rescued from an eternity of regret.

2 Timothy Chapter 4

2 Timothy 4:1-2

Paul commanded Timothy to reprove, rebuke, and exhort people. With long suffering. And doctrine. This is very rare to find someone who follows through on this. The only time I saw this in my life in a Christian context was in the late 1980s when I was in Teen Challenge. In that context the men received correction, rebuke, and encouragement all the time. It was the full time job of the staff to correct the residents in the program. This produced amazing results in the lives of the men I was in that program with. Some couldn't take it and left. Others who chose to humble themselves were changed in profound and remarkable ways.

I believe one of the reasons why there is so much apathy in the church is because people do not get rebuked and reproofed and exhorted by preachers any more. Some never preach doctrine. We need men of God who will reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

What is the context of these instructions? Paul said he charged Timothy to obey these instructions *"before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ"*. In other words, Paul told Timothy if he did not obey what he was telling him that God and the Lord Jesus would know it and hold him accountable. Let that sink in for a minute.

Also, we have a mention of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom. The Lord will return to the earth at some point in future history. It will happen as sure as the sun rises every morning. A day will arrive when the Lord Jesus will return to this earth and will establish his kingdom. He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will judge each person who ever lived on this planet. The Lord Jesus is the judge of all men. Each one will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Because we will give an account to God we need to be busy encouraging, exhorting, rebuking each other. Human nature is lazy, unbelieving, and prone to backslide at the first chance. We need brothers in Christ who will hold us accountable and correct us on a regular basis. If your local fellowship does not hold each one accountable to live a holy life then you need to keep praying and looking. You may never find a good church in these last days. In that case you need to pray and ask the Holy Ghost to stir you up every day. Ask the Lord to rebuke you, correct you, and exhort you every day. We need it. Don't let yourself get away with anything. Pray and ask God to help you see when you are wrong. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and discernment and a fear of the Lord. He will, at the same time, encourage you, comfort you, and open your heart to feel the great love he has for you.

Believe the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He is coming back again. Prepare to meet the Lord. Live your life in view of the judgment seat of Christ. His kingdom is nearer today than it was yesterday.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Paul said a time would come when men would no longer listen to sound doctrine. He said a time will come. Has this time come? From all indications we are living in the time when men no longer endure sound doctrine. How much worse will it get before the end?

Paul said men would heap to themselves teachers to satisfy the lust that is in their hearts. In other words, a covetous man will find himself a "Christian" teacher who teaches a message of prosperity and wealth. A man who has a heart set on immorality will find a teacher who teaches nothing but mercy and grace with no mention of God's correction or wrath. A man who has a heart set on bitterness will find a teacher who will harden him in this attitude of bitterness.

It will be a time when it is easy to find a teacher to justify any position a man wants to take and people will heap to themselves false teachers. Could this be a description of podcasting? Could this be a time when the Internet makes available every imaginable false teaching under the sun? I think so. I think there has never been a time in history where this prophecy could be fulfilled in such a dramatic and profound way. Internet, podcasting, audio and video streaming. Men are heaping to themselves teachers and have itching ears. They want that nagging feeling in their conscience to be silenced. How can you

silence the voice of the Holy Spirit? Replace it with constant audio bombardment from smooth talkers who teach you how to succeed in this short, brief span of time you have on this earth.

I know I have fallen into this at times. It is easy to go looking for men who teach a message that suits your lifestyle. It has never been easier in history to find a Bible teacher to tell you what your itching ears want to hear.

If I go on one of these podcast platforms I know what I will find at the top of the list in the Christian section. Wolves in sheep's clothing. False teachers, false preachers, and false prophets promoting a false gospel. That is what the world loves, and there are plenty of them out there now for people to take their pick of what they podcast they can subscribe to.

How can you find true men of God in these last days? How can you find a messenger of God preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ? There is only one way. You must repent of covetousness, and lust, and greed, and immorality. You must cry out to God with all of your heart to lead you on the path of holiness. You must cry out to God to give you a heart that receives a love of the truth. You must thirst and hunger for righteousness. If you will humble your heart like this then God will lead you to men of God who will reprove, rebuke, and exhort you with all long suffering and doctrine. The Lord will lead you into green pastures and beside the quiet waters.

2 Timothy 4:5

The word "watch" comes up a lot in the New Testament. Jesus told his disciples to watch and pray. Peter exhorts us to be alert and watchful. We have an adversary who prowls around like a predator looking for someone to devour.

Watch! Just don't look to the right or to the left. Watch in all things. Watch how much you eat. How much you watch TV. How much you exercise. How much you read and study the Bible. How much you help people. How much you pray. How much you sleep. How much you encourage and bless people. Watch thou in all things. Most importantly watch out for yourself. That self-life in you, that old man, that flesh, is your worst enemy. It is pulling you towards the ground, towards a pit, towards the gutter. It always pulls you down toward the ditch and the hole in the ground. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to rise above that self-life (old man, or flesh, as Paul called it).

Endure afflictions. We cannot avoid afflictions. You cannot run from them. You cannot hide from them. You must endure afflictions. This is a normal part of the Christian life.

An evangelist preaches the gospel with the goal of bringing people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. When you teach the Bible is it with the intent of impacting lives and seeing someone get saved? What is your purpose in teaching, preaching, sharing God's word? What is your goal? Is it the same goal that Paul had? Is it the same goal Jesus has?

We need to press on and make sure we complete everything which God put us here for. That means we need to make full proof of our ministry. Our service needs to be completed. We have tasks to complete. We have work to get done. We cannot lose sight of the fact that there is an end to our life here and we need to make good use of the time we have in order to complete the task which God gave us. Make full proof of thy ministry.

Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and me. He died in our place. He died so we would not have to die and go to hell. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. There is life after death. Jesus rose from the dead. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son. Faith in Jesus Christ will impart to you eternal life. To know Jesus is to have eternal life. Let us call on his name today.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

When Paul considered the end of his earthly life the next thought he had was receiving a reward from the Lord for his faithful service. This was a man who had a clear conscience. He knew that he had served the Lord with all his heart and that he had completed the work the Lord gave him. He was now ready to leave the earthly life and enter the next life where the Lord had a crown of righteousness for him.

This crown of righteousness was not just for Paul. Paul said anyone who also loved the appearing of the Lord Jesus would receive a crown of righteousness. To me this simply means those who continually think about the return of the Lord and have that as their goal, purpose, and hope in life will be rewarded by the Lord one day with a crown of righteousness.

There are many things people have as goals in life. They endure because they love their children. They put up with suffering and endure their job because they care about their family. But there is a much higher goal and purpose than family love. That goal is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the greatest thing we can ever do.

Someone who looks forward to Jesus coming back is not putting their hope and trust into what this world offers. Instead, they look ahead to something better in the kingdom of God.

Decide you will fight the good fight, finish the course, and offer your dying breath in praise to the Lord who saved your soul on Calvary's cross.

2 Timothy 4:9-13

Here is a father's dying request to his son in the faith. He asked Timothy to come to him as soon as possible. There was an urgency here. He didn't know how much longer he would be here. Also, his friends seemed to have deserted him or become busy with their own lives or ministries. How sad that at the end of his life the best missionary who ever lived was practically alone and waiting to be executed. Just a handful of people were his friend. This is how the world works. People forget about the elderly. They forget about showing compassion and mercy when they can no longer use someone or get something in return. May the Lord help me to never turn my back on someone in need. May the Lord help me and I pray that my heart will never be hardened toward someone in need.

Notice the simple requests that he made. He asked Timothy to bring him his coat and his Bible. He wanted to stay warm and he wanted to read his Bible.

Also, Mark had somehow been restored to a good relationship with Paul after their previous falling out in the book of Acts. Now he said Mark was profitable for the ministry. People can change. Barnabas knew this and did not give up on Mark. And now Paul acknowledged the change that took place in Mark's life.

God can change anyone. He can give us a new heart, a new attitude, and a new way of seeing things if we will listen to him. He can help us to become what he planned for us to be.

People abandoned Paul. Paul said they abandoned him, not because they did not love him, but because they loved what the world had to offer more. This is the case with many people. It is not as though people don't care about God or church or the Bible. But they just love what the world offers more. And so, at some point in their life, they just turn their back on God. We cannot love God and the world. We may try to hold both for a while, but eventually we will cross over to one side or the other. The road will reach a fork and we will go one of two ways. I've seen it happen. It is clear when someone hits that fork in the road. It's like you never even knew them.

Remember the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Call upon the name of Jesus and be saved today.

2 Timothy 4:14-18

Paul named names. He called out Alexander the copper smith by name. We do not need to be afraid or intimidated to call out the enemies of Christ by name. We need to mark people who are enemies of the gospel. Why? So we can avoid them and pray for them. Paul said the Lord would reward Alexander according to his works. This pointed forward to the prophecy in Revelation where men stand before God and are judged according to their works. You can tell when someone is not saved, because they believe they can do enough good works to outweigh the bad things they have done. They believe they can save themselves by their good works. God will judge them by this. He will judge them by their works. Unfortunately, no one will escape God's wrath through means of self-justification. We cannot justify ourselves before a holy God. All our righteousness is filthy rags.

There is only one hope for the sinner and that is the Savior Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness. He is our salvation and he is our justification. Outside of Christ there is only wrath and hellfire waiting for men.

Paul pointed to the fact that this man would face God's wrath by becoming an enemy of the gospel. Everyone who makes themselves an enemy of Christ and the gospel will face the wrath of God.

When Paul gave his defense before his earthly judges he had no friends to support or testify on his behalf. There were no character witnesses present to speak on Paul's behalf. However, the Lord Jesus stood with Paul and gave him the boldness and the spiritual power to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who judged him. All the Gentiles heard the gospel message. Therefore those who judged Paul on that day will have no excuse on the day of their own judgment before God Almighty. Paul was faithful to testify to them the truth that is in Jesus Christ.

The Lord delivered Paul out of the mouth of the lion. This could mean he literally escaped a lion like Daniel in the Old Testament. Or perhaps Paul spoke of being delivered from the attack of Satan on him. Peter called the devil a roaring lion who goes around looking for someone to devour.

We have a promise we can stand on. God will deliver us from every evil work and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom. No matter what men do to us they cannot take away our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul knew this

from personal experience. He knew God loved him and nothing could change that. His sins were washed away in the blood of his Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus died on Calvary for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. He rose from the dead on the third day. When we call on his name we are forgiven of our sins and washed clean and made whole. We are saved from the penalty that our sins deserve. All of God's wrath was poured out on the Lord Jesus at Calvary. He took our place so we would not have to spend eternity in hell separated from God. It is not God's will for anyone to perish, but for every man to come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is simple. Believe the good news and be saved today.

2 Timothy 4:19-22

Paul's final thoughts are on his brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul was a point of contact for so many people. He was a conduit of God's love for the brethren in the church. Are we? How many people do we pray for and care for and love in the church? This is a question I should ask myself. How many people do I carry in my heart.

Years ago I kept a prayer list of people I prayed for. I can still remember the names of people I knew over twenty years ago I prayed for. They have probably forgotten me by now but I did not forget them because I prayed for them.

I have some short prayer lists now of people I pray for. Most of these are family members, relatives, and people I worked with. I also try to remember the church worldwide especially brethren who are suffering for their faith in countries where Christians are openly persecuted. I pray that their faith will not fail them.

Paul's final word was that the Lord Jesus Christ be with Timothy's spirit. The Lord is with us always. He said that he would always be with us, even to the end of the age. So we pray, "Even so, return to us, Lord Jesus." I want to be where he is. May the Lord be with our spirit today and forever.

Grace be with you.

The Epistle to Titus

Titus Chapter 1

Titus 1:1-3

Paul introduced himself as a servant of God. This is something every Christian has in common with Paul, and Paul tried to relate to every man who called on the name of the Lord. We are servants of God. Paul was also an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul listed apostles as part of the gifts which God gave to the church. Do we still have apostles today? Some people would say no. Some people believe all the apostles passed away after the Bible was written. This is not the impression I get when I read the Bible. My belief is that to this day we have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in the church. Why would we need pastors but not prophets? Why would we need teachers but not apostles? Why would we need an evangelist and not a pastor? These gifts are all needed in the church today as much as they were needed in the first century church. Having said that, not everyone who calls himself a

pastor, evangelist, prophet, or apostle is actually what they claim. There are many people claiming titles for themselves but have no clue what a true prophet or apostle or pastor really is.

I believe what we have written in the Holy Bible is complete for the current dispensation we are living in. I don't think any man can add to what is written in the Bible.

Beware of false apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers who try to add to God's word or take away from it. There are a lot of cults who create their own version of the Bible or who write their own Bibles like the Mormons and the Jehovah Witness cults.

God promised eternal life before the world began. He made a plan to save mankind before he ever created man. God mapped out the story of the gospel and made sure everything took place so men could simply believe God's word and be saved. God's Word is Jesus Christ. He is the Word made flesh. He died on the cross in our place. They buried him in a rich man's tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead and was seen by many people, including his chosen apostles who carried the testimony of his resurrection.

God revealed his plan of salvation through humble men preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. He chose to reveal himself in a humble and simple manner. He called men who were nothing in the world to be his ambassadors and proclaim the gospel that Christ died for our sins. He is now risen. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father and he lives to make intercession for us. One day the Lord Jesus will return to this earth and establish his kingdom over the nations of this earth. Once that time is complete then everything will be completed in the New Jerusalem. God will make a new heavens and a new earth.

Jesus Christ is God. He is God the Son. He is the Son of God. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He reveals himself in the roles of prophet, priest, and king. He has also revealed himself to this world through Israel, the church, and through a kingdom which will reign over the nations one day.

The Lord searches for those who will trust in him completely. Those who abide in the gospel are overcomers. Overcomers are given to eat of the hidden manna in **Revelation 2:17**. That hidden manna is kingdom authority. Those who overcome will reign and rule with Christ. That kingdom authority is available to us now if we believe the gospel and are saved.

Titus 1:4-5

Titus received his marching orders from Paul. Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order and ordain elders in different cities. Titus had the responsibility to oversee different churches in Crete. This was a huge responsibility, as we see in the next few verses.

He addressed Titus as his son after the common faith. Perhaps Paul was directly involved in bringing Titus to the saving faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. He extended grace, mercy, and peace from God to Titus. This was a different greeting than what is seen in other letters of Paul. Usually we see grace and peace, but here there was grace, mercy, and peace.

It is work to set things in order in churches. Churches do not automatically organize themselves and set everything in the proper place. Men are called by God to lead, organize, and put things in their proper order in the church. Notice how important it is that churches are set in order. This reminds me of

another verse "*let everything be done decently and in order*". God's kingdom is very organized. Look at how precise and specific God's instructions were to Noah in building the ark which saved him and his family. Think of how specific God's instructions were for Moses to be build the tabernacle in the wilderness. God has not changed. The church also has specific order in it which if it is not kept opens the doors for the enemy to bring in chaos and confusion and hurt people.

God's people are compared to a flock of sheep. In order for sheep to be provided for and protected there needs to be a shepherd to keep the flock orderly and in the right place at the right time. They are led out to green pastures and made to lie down beside quiet waters. This takes work and dedication for the shepherd. There are men God calls to do this job for the church.

When these men do not do their job then the whole church suffers. Sheep cannot lead themselves. They need a strong leader who will take the oversight. May God give us true men of God in these last days who will lead the flock to spiritual provision and protection. May these shepherds point us to God who is our portion forever.

Titus 1:6-9

Paul provided Titus with a checklist for evaluating if someone was qualified to be a bishop. A bishop was an overseer. He looked after people. In the context of the church he was a preacher and administrator. Let's take a look at this list of qualifications.

Blameless. Surely that did not mean the man was perfect. Rather, it meant when he was accused of wrongdoing it didn't stick. People like to accuse a man in leadership of different things. Look at the history of Moses and Israel. But the accusations do not stick to the man of God. God will defend his man. Blameless also means the man's conscience is at peace because he believes the gospel and knows his sins are forgiven because of the work of Christ.

Husband of one wife. That sounds plain enough, but some see this as meaning that a man cannot be a preacher if he was divorced in the past. A husband of one wife, in their definition, means he only had in his life one wife. But this logic seems flawed. I would rather err on the side that this was a statement against polygamy. Also, it would mean the man cannot be married and also have a girlfriend on the side. That would definitely disqualify him.

How can someone expect to lead a church if he cannot lead his own house. If children do not obey their father then why should a church follow his direction. This basically means the father did not raise his children with any discipline and did not care about his children enough to correct them. If this is the case the man won't care enough about enforcing order in church either. Not a good candidate for leadership if a man did not lead his family.

Stewardship is very important for a church leader. We need to be faithful in every matter, whether financial, resources, or people. We need to understand the importance of being a good steward. This is an intricate part of leadership. A man who cannot be trusted with money cannot be trusted to lead a church.

Self willed. This means his primary motivation is self gratification or that he is stubborn and does not listen to others. This goes along with the rest of the list with being angry or a striker. Someone who wants to fight and argue does not need to be a leader in the church.

Wine. Paul did not expressly forbid drinking alcohol. But he said if a man was likely to drink alcohol he probably won't make a good leader in the church.

Money. Is the man motivated by making a paycheck or serving people? Filthy lucre is an old English way of saying the man loved money more than people.

The next list goes along with the thought of loving people: hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.

Can he remember the gospel? Can he remember to preach the gospel when he stands in the pulpit or does he just ramble all over the place telling stories? If a man cannot remember the simple facts of the gospel he does not need to be up there preaching and leading the church.

He cannot be a coward. He needs to be confident enough to resist people who contradict the gospel. He needs to know how to resist people trying to take over his class or sermon.

This is quite a list of character qualities. I don't know if I have ever met someone who could check off everything on this list.

How can I be saved and know I am going to heaven when I die? Believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved.

Titus 1:10-14

Paul told Titus there were many who were unruly, vain talkers, and deceivers. This was especially true with the religious crowd. This should not surprise anyone who has attended church for a while. It is full of people who are unruly and vain talkers. Notice also this word "deceivers". This means there are people in church who are used by demons to spread lies in the church. Whenever I see the word "deceivers" I immediately remember what Jesus said about the devil. Jesus said the devil is the father of liars. And in Revelation the destination of all liars is the lake of fire. This tells me that any place people gather for something religious you are guaranteed to run into people who are either possessed or influenced by evil spirits. Demons are drawn to religion like bees to a honey comb. Religion is the devil's bread and butter. More people have been murdered over religion than anything else.

Paul told Titus to stop these unruly people because they could completely subvert whole churches. In those days churches were in peoples' homes. They would go into a house of people and pretend to be preachers in order to make get money. It was all about the money and what they could get out of it. This is a sign you are probably dealing with a false preacher if the first thing they want to do is take up a collection or sell their stuff in the lobby. Not everyone. Got to be careful not to judge too harshly but beware. Listen carefully. Be alert that you are not deceived by unruly and vain talkers and deceivers.

What was Paul's answer for these slow bellies? He said to rebuke them sharply. Do not spare their feelings. Correct them openly and publicly and drive them out with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

There are a few men I remember from years past who were faithful to do this in the church. One was David Wilkerson. The other one was Dave Hunt. They were both faithful to correct, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

Sound doctrine is the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. Put your faith in Jesus and be saved today.

Titus 1:15-16

What does it mean? To the pure all things are pure? This reminds me of what Jesus said about eating food. He said the kind of food a man ate did not make him clean or unclean. But what was in the heart of a man made him clean or unclean. I think Paul was saying the same thing here. If a man has a pure heart and his motives are love for God and fellow man then he will see the world around him in that light. Eating different foods will not make him defiled. Having a pure heart means that what the man does will be pure. From the teaching of the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul we learn that what comes from the heart is what really counts. Outward religion does not count. An inward, heartfelt relationship with God is what really matters. Sometimes a person has a pure heart and may say or do things that to an outsider would appear to be non-Christian. But what makes something we do pure is why we do it. In this sense, many things which people do may seem on the outside to be non-Christian but are done with the right motive and purpose and are therefore pure. I can think of plenty of examples but don't want to get sidetracked by that at the moment.

Paul said that to someone who is defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure. If a wicked man puts money in the offering plate it is as if he put a piece of rotting flesh in the offering plate. If an unbeliever sings in church choir it is just as evil as if someone went to a satanic rock concert and flashed the devil sign. What matters is what is in a man's heart. Even unbelievers can be religious but all of their righteous acts are as filthy rags in the sight of God.

How do we become pure? How can we make sure our heart is pure and that we are right with God? You cannot earn God's favor by doing good works. The only way we can be made right with God is to believe the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is straight forward and plain enough so that anyone can understand, receive, and believe. Christ died for our sins on the cross at Calvary. He took our place and received the punishment for our sins. God's wrath was poured out on Jesus at Calvary. He took our place. When we trust in the work of Christ then we receive God's righteousness. God imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. Just as Jesus took our sins on himself he placed his own righteousness on us. This exchange was made at Calvary. After Jesus died he was buried in a tomb. On the third day after his death he rose from the dead. His resurrection proved that he is the Son of God and God the Son. He is one of the three persons in the trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

If we reject that God is three in one we are left with Jesus being only a man. If he was only a man then he could not have died in our place because he would have been a sinner like everyone else. Only a sinless sacrifice is acceptable to the holy God. Jesus had to be sinless in order for this sacrifice on Calvary to be acceptable. If he was not the Son of God then his sacrifice would not be enough.

But Jesus is the Son of God. He died as a man upon Calvary. He is fully man. He is fully God. He is the God Man, Jesus Christ. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Read **1 Corinthians 15** for more information about the gospel Paul preached and also the resurrection. Paul went into a lot of detail about resurrection in that chapter. Our entire faith as a Christian rests completely on the foundation that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day.

Titus Chapter 2

Titus 2:1-2

Paul continued his instructions to Titus on building the church. When a man of God preaches his message should produce fruit in those listening. If a church is not producing fruit there is something wrong. Either the preacher is missing the mark or the people are spiritually dead. Or, it could be a demonic stronghold over the church preventing the preacher's message from reaching the hearts of the people. In that case it takes more than one lone pastor to break through. It sometimes takes all the gifts of God to impact a church: it takes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. A lone pastor can not get the job done in certain areas where the ground is hard and the enemy has long held sway over people.

Here Paul told Titus to speak things which become sound doctrine. He began with what should be fruit in aged men. They should be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. This is the result of the gospel in aged men. The result of the gospel in aged men should be a serious mind, knowing that eternity that is approaching, they should be careful with the things of the world, and should be able to repeat the gospel. Do they love others? Are they patient?

Here is a good list for evaluating whether you are doing your job as a preacher. Are the older men producing this kind of fruit? It might not always be the preacher's fault, as I said. If the aged men are not producing fruit there is a problem. Check your message. Pray and ask the Lord to show you if there is a demonic stronghold over the church which you cannot fight off by yourself. If there is then you need to pray God will send you an apostle or prophet or evangelist or someone else who will help break the back of the enemy in that church.

Titus 2:3-5

Titus was instructed to preach the gospel so those in the church would bear specific fruit in their lives. We covered the fruit for aged men in the previous verses. In these verses Paul covered the fruit aged women should produce.

Aged women should have holy behavior. What does this mean? I know some churches define holiness as long hair and dresses. But what is holiness? It is not focused on outward appearance or on outward religion. Holiness is a fear of the Lord in the heart of a person. They will shun evil and pursue a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.

The next item is false accusation. Aged women should not spread negative reports about people. This seems to be an issue this group have had since the beginning. A Christian woman should be aware that slander and false accusation is a temptation the enemy will bait them with. Stay away from gossip, slander, and false accusation. This reminds me of the story about Jezebel how she had Nabal killed through false accusation.

Wine is an issue. The aged women should avoid alcohol as much as possible. Again, there is no express word of forbidding a person from drinking wine, but an admonition that they are "not given to much wine".

They are to be teachers of good things. What good things? They are to teach younger women to be sober, love their husbands, love their children. Women were to be taught to be caretakers of their husbands and children and homes. They manage the household affairs. They take care of the people in the household.

What is the reason why aged women should have this behavior? That the word of God be not blasphemed.

We have gone far astray from these basic principles of living. Men and women both no longer hold their roles in family, work, and society. As a result homes and families are broken and chaos reigns, not only in society, but also in the church.

We need to return as much as possible to these teachings. We need to recover our proper place and roles as men, women, husbands, wives, and families. This is the only hope society has that the church will return to its proper place of showing the way and being the example.

Titus 2:6-8

When Paul told Titus to teach others how to act and live it was for a purpose. What was the purpose? Paul tried to make sure those under Titus would be protected from slander. Who is the slanderer? Who is the accuser of the brethren? The devil is the accuser. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Paul tried to show Titus how to protect himself and also those who would believe the gospel through his ministry. We protect ourselves by living contrary to the devil and the world system. We do this by being sober minded, showing good works, having good doctrine that is not self-serving or twisting scripture to turn us into a self-worshiper, by being serious, sincere, and having sound speech that cannot be condemned.

This last part about sound speech stands out to me. It is in contrast to how I hear the young generation of preachers conduct themselves. I heard there was a movement of young preachers who would curse or use graphic detail of immorality in their sermons. This is not sound speech. It can be condemned by the devil. It gives the devil opportunity to speak evil against them. Preachers should know better, but evidently a lot don't know any better than to cuss and raise a ruckus. Pity the men who are this ignorant.

All these instructions about how we should conduct ourselves was for our good, protection, and so we can be successful in preaching the gospel and making disciples. If we do not follow the pattern in the Bible we open ourselves to spiritual attack from the devil. Let's be smart and obey what the Bible said for us to do.

The gospel is plain. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved from the destination of those who do not repent. The final destination for every unrepentant sinner is a lake of fire. God made a way by the finished work of Christ for everyone to escape that fate if we will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:9-10

Paul covered aged men, aged women, young women, and young men. Paul covered another group who lived in the common household of his day. Servants. Also known as slaves.

In modern America there isn't slavery but these same ideas and principles can be transferred to the employee and employer relationship. The idea here was to not talk back to your boss, to be faithful, and to not steal. Those three ideas under gird or explore the relationship an employee has towards his employer.

I remember reading a tract years ago called "working hard or hardly working". It was a tract that was published by Last Days Ministries. The idea was that Christians should put their faith into practice in the work place. We spend most of our lives in our employment environment. What better place to demonstrate the virtues and advantages of living as a Christian. Christians should always be the most hard working, the most honest, and the most faithful employee. Employers should be able to easily see the value and advantage of employing someone who is a Christian.

By living like this at work we will "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things". This means we give the Lord a good name among people who are unbelievers. We can preach the gospel to people by working hard, showing up on time for work, not complaining, volunteering to do extra work, and for always doing our best job. If we do this we will be a good witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

What happens if we don't do this? Then we leave the devil an opportunity to make accusations against Christians, against the church, and against the gospel. People will always use an unfaithful or lazy Christian as an excuse to dismiss the claims of the gospel. Don't give that opportunity. Let your life back up the truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ. You never know! Somebody's eternal salvation may depend on you being faithful in your job.

Titus 2:11-15

Paul preached the gospel and also taught the practical effect of the gospel in a believer's life. He also included in these verses the doctrine of Christ's return. He showed that a Christian's life will be filled with good works. You really have almost everything a preacher needs in these few verses. He ended this by telling Titus to "speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority." The man of God has authority from God to speak, exhort, and rebuke. This is the business of every sincere Christian. We need to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority.

God's grace which brought salvation appeared to all men. How is this possible? I do not know but it is plain that every man is accountable for knowing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The grace which came in the gospel taught the believer to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. There is real holiness in the life of the Christian. There is practical holiness where the born again Christian has an aversion to ungodliness and worldly lusts. If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but can cuss, take God's name in vain, get drunk, and sleep around? What do you think? Is he a Christian? I don't think so. He might be religious but he is not a Christian.

The blessed hope is the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will come back to earth. The church will be raptured. Jesus will return to earth and establish his kingdom over the nations. It will happen. There is nothing that can stop this from happening. It is written in the Bible and it will come to

pass. Best idea we could have is to prepare for this. How? Believe the gospel! Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

Jesus gave himself. He took our place. We are the guilty ones and deserve punishment but Jesus took our place. We can benefit from this by believing, receiving, and calling on the name of Jesus Christ. There is nothing else you or I can do to earn our way into heaven and escape hell. Believe the gospel. That is all we can do.

When we believe and are filled with the Holy Spirit we will be zealous of good works. We will want to be around other Christians who are serving, helping, proclaiming, and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christians are peculiar people. We have been called out of darkness and are now translated into the kingdom of God's Son Jesus Christ.

Titus Chapter 3

Titus 3:1-3

Why should I be gentle and meek toward unbelievers around me? Because I was an unbeliever. God pulled me out of the ditch and had mercy on me. Now he told me to do the same. Have mercy on people. Be gentle. Be meek. Don't speak evil of people. Don't point out the faults of people. May the Lord help me remember this.

Why? Because it makes it much harder to love my neighbor when I train myself to focus on his faults. It is much harder to live and work and relate to people when I focus on their shortcomings.

Paul taught us how to relate to others. He put this in the context of principalities and power and magistrates. These are all words that point to government that we live under. Have a humble attitude toward leadership in city, county, state, and federal authority. We are to be humble toward people in those positions no matter if those people are Christian or not. We need to be ready to every good work.

I remember when I was a young Christian and Bill Clinton was president. I was living at a ministry home with a street preacher. He was a good street preacher, but he could easily slip off the deep end with putting down the president and pointing out all the sins of the president. It made me wonder if he read passages in the Bible like this. One day I got so tired of listening to it I went upstairs and started to pray for President Clinton. An amazing thing happened. As I started to pray I began to weep for the President. I had a genuine feeling of pity toward President Clinton. I am a nobody but that the day I prayed for the President I knew God heard my prayers.

Stop focusing on faults, mistakes, and things that divide us. Start praying for others especially people who are in leadership in this country.

These people need to hear the gospel. We should pray and have an attitude of humility toward those who are in authority. This is the example Paul the apostle taught us. It is the same attitude the Lord Jesus had when he stood before Pilate. He was humble and gave an example for us.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus is saved and born again. Cry out to Jesus and have your name written down in the book of life.

Titus 3:4-7

When Jesus died on Calvary he took our place. God did this for us. There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor by good works. There is nothing we can do to erase our sins. This is why the Lord Jesus died on the cross. Now we are justified by God's grace. God's grace is demonstrated through the work Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. God's kindness and love toward us appeared in our Lord Jesus Christ. He saved us from our sins. He is our savior. Now we have become heirs of eternal life. As a result of putting our faith in what God did we become heirs of eternal life. This inward work in our hearts is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. He applies the shed blood of Jesus to our lives and makes us alive in the spirit. From beginning to end this is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Man cannot find spiritual life through works of righteousness. Men created false religions from the beginning with Cain. Cain had a false religion whereby he worshiped the god of his own imagination. He had an idea of who God was that he created for himself. And when the real God in heaven rejected Cain's false god Cain was angry enough to commit murder. The man of flesh persecutes and murders the man of the spirit. Why? Because a price must be paid for sin. When men reject God's plan of solving the sin problem they are left to figure out a way to solve the sin problem for themselves. The answer is always written in blood. It is written in the blood of Jesus, or it is written in the blood of killing other people. This is the entire history of the human race in a few sentences.

God opened my eyes to see his son Jesus. He opened my ears to hear his voice, and he gave me a heart to believe the truth in the gospel. I believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. There is no longer any blood on my hands anymore. God has washed me clean and made me whole in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

In what way do you think you will approach God? By your good deeds? By your good works? No, you will be judged by your works and sentenced to hellfire. The only hope any of us has is to be justified by the grace of God in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:8-11

Paul outlined what is profitable for Christians to do and also what to avoid in church.

We avoid foolish questions, family trees, contentions, and arguments about the Bible. These conversations are unprofitable and vain. This tells me that most of the modern movement of having a "conversation" is pointless. We are not really taught in the Bible to have "conversations" with people who do not believe the Bible or who want to argue about the Bible. Instead, we avoid foolish questions. We avoid arguments over trivial matters or non-essential doctrines.

A heretic is someone who denies essential doctrines which include the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. If someone rejects the resurrection he is a heretic. Paul gave this kind of a person a couple of chances to repent but then they are to be "rejected". This probably means

driving them out of Christian fellowship. Those people are "*subverted, sinneth, being condemned of himself*". It is not the fault of the church if this person persists as a heretic. We can only lead people to the living waters; we can't make them drink.

"*Affirming constantly*" sounds like we need to be consistent, persistent, and relentless in repeating the truth of God's word. We keep reminding ourselves and preach to one another God's word. People who want to argue or sow strife are probably heretics. They are used by the devil to take attention away from the Lord Jesus and keep it on the person causing the ruckus. Mark these trouble makers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Christians are to be careful to maintain good works. We need to serve others in a consistent manner. Pray and ask the Lord to show you how you can help serve other people. The Lord will open doors for you to be a blessing to other people.

Titus 3:12-15

Paul mentioned once again the importance of maintaining good works for necessary uses and he ended this letter with "*grace be with you all*". Grace and works walk hand in hand through all of Paul's letters. Grace is the most potent motivation anyone can have for good works. Good works is a lifestyle of being Christ centered and loving your neighbor as you already love yourself.

Notice Paul was the point of contact for many people in the church. He gave instructions on how to help his brothers conduct ministry. He wanted to help those who proclaimed the gospel. Who have we helped to further the gospel? Do we support a ministry, a church, or a missionary who preaches the gospel? I want to be a part of supporting those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every part of the body of Christ needs to work together to reach the lost while we have time. The night is coming when no one will be able to work any longer.

The Epistle to Philemon

Philemon 1:1-3

This was a short letter from Paul to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus. This was a family who hosted a house church and were possibly brought to the Lord Jesus by Paul. Paul described himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Throughout Paul's imprisonment he considered himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ. This was a personal letter from Paul to Philemon.

The purpose of this letter was intercession. Paul interceded on behalf of Onesimus who he met in prison. This letter was not for instruction or rebuke but rather shows us an old saint who interceded on behalf of one of his disciples.

This demonstrated the heart of Jesus and how he intercedes on our behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead. Jesus ascended to his Father in heaven and he lives to this day making intercession for us.

The heart of Jesus is the heart of an intercessor. In this letter we will see that Paul followed the Lord Jesus in interceding for those who were wayward. May the Lord give us compassion and help us intercede for those the Lord puts into our lives.

Philemon 1:4-7

Paul was not only an apostle but also an intercessor for the church. Paul testified to Philemon and the church in his house that he prayed for them. He made mention of them always in his prayers. He received a report of their love and faith which they had toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints. Love for God goes hand in hand with love of the church. Those who say they love God but hate their brothers are deceived. How can we say we love God if we do not love our neighbor?

The church in Philemon's house was effective in encouraging the saints. They had a testimony of faith and love and encouraged the saints who came to their church. News of house churches spread by letter and word of mouth and it was encouraging to hear of the success of house churches. It brought Paul joy and comfort because of their love and faith.

The words 'faith' and 'love' come up quite a bit in Paul's letters. It would be interesting to do a study of these words, and see how basic these ideas are to every Christian, local church, and the entire body of Christ.

We have an example of praying for the church. Remember to pray for the church and brothers and sisters around the world. Many Christians suffer for their faith in Christ. Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel and many Christians are still suffering for their faith in Christ.

Remember to pray for the church. Pray for revival. Pray people will be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Pray we may work while we have the light. Night is coming when no one will be able to work. Stay in the word and stay in prayer, too.

Philemon 1:8-11

Paul interceded for Onesimus who was his son in the faith. Paul had a relationship with Philemon, and he also had a relationship with Onesimus. I assume that Paul brought both of them to Jesus. Philemon hosted a house church so he was a man of some means. Paul met Onesimus in prison and so I assume Onesimus was a run away slave from Philemon.

Onesimus once served Philemon but probably ran away. He had a divine appointment with Paul in prison. Paul brought Onesimus to faith in Christ just as he did with Philemon. I wonder what Paul felt when he realized Onesimus was a former slave of Philemon? This would put him in the moral dilemma of either keeping Onesimus as a helper or sending him back to Philemon. No doubt Paul was bound to do the right thing and sent Onesimus back to Philemon.

Something from the Lord happened in this situation with Onesimus and Philemon. Love intervened. Paul interceded with Philemon for Onesimus on the basis of love. This is true spiritual authority Paul showed here. He was not lording it over Philemon or commanding him but instead he appealed to Philemon on the basis of love. In reality this is how all God's kingdom operates. Everything outside of love in ministry or church only amounts to dead religion. Only the motive of love will bring successful intercession and real spiritual life to people.

People know the difference between spiritual authority based on God's love and carnal authority based on the world system. One brings spiritual life, and the other oppression and spiritual death.

Once again Paul identified himself as a prisoner. He completely identified with Onesimus. Paul put himself on the same level as Onesimus even though he was an apostle. Despite the fact he had every right to demand Philemon do the right thing he appealed to him. He humbled himself and appealed to him on the basis of love. This is true Christianity. There was no deceitfulness, no guile, no manipulation, no bullying, and no intimidation. There was a plain man of God interceding on behalf of a brother in Christ.

The Lord Jesus interceded for us. He fully identified himself with us in our humanity so he could intercede on our behalf with God the Father. Jesus is our great high priest and intercessor who lives forever. Every Christian should have this same attitude. A heart of compassion. A heart of love. A heart of humility.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He ascended to heaven and is at the right hand of God the Father. He lives forever to make intercession for us. He will return again to this earth and establish his kingdom over all the nations. When all is complete we will be with God forever in the New Jerusalem. This is my purpose and my goal: to be with the Lord forever.

Philemon 1:12-16

Paul sent Onesimus with this letter to return to Philemon. Philemon was his former master. So Onesimus went back to his previous master with a letter in his hand from the apostle Paul. I bet this was a shock to Philemon. Can you imagine the awe that struck Philemon when he realized the divine leading of God who brought Onesimus to Paul? Then Paul sent Onesimus back to him. This letter must have become a family heirloom and saved in a special place. Of course it was! We still have a copy of this letter today.

Paul said he would have kept Onesimus with him because he was changed. That is what happens when people become a Christian. They change. They are no longer good for nothing. They no longer run away from problems. Instead, they take responsibility. They become fruitful and productive. This was what happened to Onesimus. He became so useful Paul wanted to keep him around but knew he had to send him back to Philemon.

It seems Paul held the thought that Philemon might send Onesimus back to help him. We see the heart of Paul when he said, *"perhaps he departed for a season that thou shouldest receive him for ever"*. This reminds me of the parable Jesus taught of the prodigal son. The wayward son left for a season but when he came back he was more than just a son. He was now a humble and wise son, a useful son. He was a son who was humble and repentant. This is the way Onesimus went back to Philemon: in humility, in repentance, and not just as a slave. Onesimus had changed his status. Now he was a Christian which made him a brother of Philemon.

Within the church there is no master or slave. There is no longer any man exalting himself over another. We all stand on equal ground at the foot of Calvary.

Paul said Onesimus was like a son to him and he encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus as a son. Perhaps Paul remembered the parable Jesus taught about the prodigal son. The prodigal said he was only worthy to be a servant in his father's house but the Father called him his son.

Oh, to hear the Lord say, "You belong to me". We are no longer just servants but we are his friends. We are the brothers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah, I truly do have a brother who sticks closer than anyone. The brothers in this world fail but Christ never fails us. He died for us. He was buried and he rose again on the third day. We can put all of our trust and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Philemon 1:17-25

Paul asked that Philemon would put all of the debts Onesimus owed on Paul himself. This was another reflection of the finished and completed work of Christ. This is what the Lord Jesus did for us. Everything we owed justice and God's wrath the Lord Jesus took on himself. He took our debt on himself and paid for all our debt by dying on the cross. He died on the cross so that we could be forgiven the debt of our sin.

Paul was living out the completed work of Christ. Anyone who is truly in Christ will display the same kind of behavior. Anyone who is in Christ will speak, and live, and have the same attitude that Jesus had. The Lord Jesus laid down his life so that we could live. Christians do the same thing. They give up their lives so others may come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's final request was that they would make room for him in their house. He asked them to pray for him that he would be released from prison and would have an opportunity to come and stay with them. Paul not only preached the gospel but he gave his life to people. We cannot separate the gospel from our lives. If others will hear and believe they must also see the gospel in the lives of those who preach the gospel. The people Paul brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ saw in his life something so radical they believed his message. Paul lived what he preached.

May the Lord give us a heart to intercede and lay down our lives so others may also find salvation in Jesus.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. This was witnessed by many people, and the testimony of these historical facts were passed down to us. May the Lord open our eyes so we may perceive the gift of eternal life he extends to us today.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Hebrews Chapter 1

Hebrews 1:1-3

God is the first word in Hebrews. This beginning reminds me of the beginning of Genesis. **Genesis 1:1**, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" No argument about the existence of God. No logical explanation. All we have is a simple declaration of the truth and reality of historical fact. In the beginning. God. Created.

Also, we can compare this to the gospel of John's opening verses. **John 1:1**, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" No logical explanation or argument here either. Just a simple proclamation of the truth and the reality that God is. God is! And he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

I think we should pattern our gospel preaching after the example we see in the Bible. I think we should simply share God's word with the world.

I've come to the conclusion that faith is not a matter of the mind or intellect, but a matter of the heart. The mind is a convert of what a man believes in his heart.

God spoke to his people in the past through prophets. Does this mean he no longer has prophets who speak his word? Based on my study of the Bible and my experience I believe God still speaks. Anything we hear, however, must be tested by the written word of God. God does not contradict what is in his written word. Everything we hear must be in total harmony and agreement with the written word of God.

We still have prophets. The apostle pointed this out in **Ephesians 4:11**, "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*"

The church needs every gift it can get from God. We need men of God who hear the voice of God and who proclaim the word of God without compromise. We need men of God who will turn God's people away from their sin and backsliding. God always had men of God in the house of God who were prophets to the people of God. This never changed.

However, the point the apostle made in this letter was that the Lord Jesus Christ is superior and exalted far above any other prophet who ever lived.

John the Baptist said he himself must decrease, but Christ must increase. John the Baptist was only a man.

However, Jesus is the son of man and the son of God. Jesus is God's Son. He is God the Son. There is a huge difference between men who spoke God's word and the Word of God who spoke to us and lived among us as a man. Big difference.

We should understand this is the main point the apostle was driving at in the book of Hebrews.

He tried to tell the Jews who believed in Jesus that Jesus is exalted above all prophets, all angels, above everything which ever was before. Jesus is exalted above all things.

This is why he immediately went into this outpouring of words where he said that Jesus is "the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and upholding all things, by whom also he made the worlds". The apostle drove home how exalted Christ is above all things.

Jesus is the express image of God. He is God. He is not an angel. He is not another prophet. He is not merely a teacher, or a preacher, or a faith healer.

Jesus is God incarnate in the flesh. He is one of three persons in the triune God. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father in heaven. He lives forever to make intercession for us.

God spoke through prophets. He still uses men to preach his word to build, encourage, and comfort the church. However, Jesus is more than a prophet. He is our Lord and Savior.

Remember when Jesus was on the mount of transfiguration with Moses and Elijah. Peter suggested he make three tents for these three great men of God.

But what did God say to Peter and the disciples? **Mark 9:7**, "*And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.*"

This is the message of Hebrews. Jesus Christ is God's son. Listen to what Jesus says to us. He speaks to us. God is speaking right now. Jesus said his sheep hear his voice and follow him. Are you one of the Lord's sheep? Then you should listen to him and follow him.

Peter never forgot that day. **2 Peter 1:18**, "*And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*" Peter never forgot that he heard the voice of God.

Hebrews 1:4-7

God the Father spoke to God the Son! What does this mean? It means in one verse we have two persons who make up the three persons of God. God is three people in one God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can clearly see God spoke to his Son. And his Son was exalted over angels. God's Son is NOT an angel, as cults deceive people to think. Jesus Christ is not an angel. He is God's Son. He is the only begotten Son of God. Not only is he the Son of God but he is God the Son. God is three in one. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three in one. To miss this truth in the Bible is deliberate and purposeful delusion and deception.

Why lead people away from this basic truth in the Bible? My opinion is because the enemy tries to disqualify what Christ did at Calvary by convincing people that he was just a man. But if he was just a man then he would not have been sinless. And if he was not sinless then he could not provide a substitute for sin. He had to be a man in order to represent man. But he also had to be God in order to be completely sinless. He was the Lamb of God who took away our sins. If we deny the three in one nature of God we end up denying the atonement of Christ. If anyone denies the atoning work of Christ he is not saved because this is the foundation upon which our sins are forgiven. There is no other way. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. No one can receive forgiveness of sins except through faith and by receiving the work of Christ on Calvary.

Jesus is not an angel. He is exalted above angels. God never said to an angel, "You are my Son". This verse proves beyond any doubt that Jesus Christ was never an angel and he is not an angel today. Angels are created creatures who serve God. Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son. We should listen only to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is the apostle making a point about this? The purpose of Hebrews was to prove beyond any doubt that Christ is exalted over angels and over everything in the religious system under Moses and Israel. Everything in Israel and God's law pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Lord Jesus everything in the Old Testament is fulfilled. The Old Testament contained types, figures, and shadows that pointed to and symbolized the reality which is in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He is returning to this earth at some point in historical future. He will establish his kingdom over the nations. After 1,000 years everything will be completed and finished in the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 1:8-9

Someone spoke to "the Son". We need to identify who spoke. In the context the one who spoke to the Son was the Father. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father spoke to his Son and he said to his Son, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". God the Father called God the Son "God". The Son is God. The Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God. This is basic doctrine in the Bible. Without this basic understanding of the nature of God it is nearly impossible to understand the atonement, the sacrifice Christ made for us, and what this means.

Everything in creation was built by God and has his fingerprint. We cannot understand the world around us or ourselves unless we first have the knowledge of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

God the Father declared to his Son that the Son is God and that his throne is forever. We need to understand that the scriptures points to the Messiah, the Son of God (God the Son), and to the kingdom. Jesus will reign and rule over his kingdom. The anointing part in these verses points us to the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. All three persons in the Godhead, the Triune God, have a part they perform. God is one, and he works in complete harmony as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Do not be led astray by the cult teaching that God was the Father, became the Son, and is now the Spirit. This cult teaching is called modalism and is false.

God is eternal. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God has always been and will always be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The point the apostle made was that Christ rules over a kingdom and Christ is God. The Son of God is king and the Son of God is God the Son. He will reign over an earthly kingdom just as he reigns over the heavenly realm.

The Messianic kingdom is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Messiah which Israel pointed to and will one day receive. They will look on the one whom they pierced, they will mourn, and they will all be saved in one day. All Israel will be saved.

Let us hold fast our faith and focus on the kingdom which is coming. This earthly season is passing away, but there is a kingdom coming which will never pass away.

Hebrews 1:10-12

What God created is temporary. God laid the foundation of the earth. He made the heavens with his hands. However, the earth and the heavens shall come to an end and be changed. This is set in contrast to the Lord himself who never changes. Malachi 3:6, "For I am the Lord, I change not..." The Lord is the same yesterday, and today and forever. Based on this fact in the Bible we must put aside any doctrine that teaches that God changes or evolves. These lies come from cults like Mormons who say God was once a man and became God. This is a lie of the devil. God did not evolve. The Lord does not

change. He was always God. He is the Alpha and the Omega, he is the Beginning and the End. He does not change.

God's creation is changing. This world we live in fades away. We do not always see this on a daily basis but we need to let this fact sink in. Our lives are brief in this current season. Our goal is not this temporary life.

Preachers who focus people on the here and now lead people astray. The Lord Jesus and the apostles focused on eternity. The Lord Jesus died for us and redeemed us. After establishing these eternal facts we are taught to look forward to the appearing of the Lord Jesus and his kingdom. We are to live in view of the judgment seat of Christ and his kingdom.

Psalm 90:2, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."*

Notice the contrast between what is eternal and what is temporary. This pattern runs all through the Bible. Read **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**. Notice the contrast between the temporary and the eternal. The entire thrust of the Bible is to get our attention off the temporary and on the eternal life we have in God's kingdom.

Why do mega preachers focus people's attention on the temporary? I believe it is God's wrath on America. I believe it is God's way of allowing people to become hardened in unbelief and apostasy. These mega false preachers are God's wrath on a prideful nation that shakes her fist at God.

The gospel is simple. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus is saved. Put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life and the forgiveness of your sins.

Hebrews 1:13-14

Here Paul circled back around to angels. He made the point that Jesus Christ is exalted over angels and over the religious system in Israel. That entire religious system, though it was put in place by God, was for the purpose of pointing to the Messiah. Once the Lord Jesus arrived the religious system had fulfilled its purpose. There was no longer any legitimate religious system for animal sacrifice. All this became irrelevant after Christ was raised from the dead on the third day.

Father God never said to an angel, "Sit at my right hand". God the Father said to his Son to sit at his right hand until his enemies were made his footstool. This is what is currently taking place right now. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God the Father. God the Father is putting all things underneath the feet of the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus returns all the nations will come underneath his kingdom. The air will be cleansed of the evil influence of principalities and powers of darkness in heavenly places.

Here we see the purpose God made angels. They are ministering spirits sent forth to serve those who will inherit salvation. When the Lord Jesus appears those whom God prepared will be raised up and meet the Lord Jesus in the air and so they shall ever be with the Lord. Angels, in this current day and

time, are serving those who are saved, who are being saved, and who will be saved on the day of the Lord.

It will help us avoid a lot of false doctrine if we realize the function of angels, and do not get caught up in the worship or adoration of these creatures who were made to serve those who inherit salvation.

We have another warning about angels in **Colossians 2:18**. *"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind"*.

There is real danger when people get caught up with the supernatural and worship of angels. The danger is losing your inheritance as a Christian. You can lose your reward. This does not mean losing eternal life. It means losing your reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

Do not be led astray by false doctrine which promotes angels or people who want to distract you from the gospel with in-depth promotion of angels and angelic activity.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He now sits at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. He will return again and establish his kingdom over the earth. After 1,000 years everything will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews Chapter 2

Hebrews 2:1

There are many exhortations in the Bible to hold onto what we hear. We are exhorted to hold fast. We are to give earnest heed and remember. Part of what churches do on a regular basis is "remembering" the Lord's death until he comes back. We remember what the Lord did for us in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. We remember the gospel. Why? Isn't it enough to have once believed the gospel? Can we not go about our lives now and not be bothered by religion?

Those who ask these questions are the same people who ask questions like "who was Cain's wife". These are questions by people who attempt to subvert the truth rather than understand the truth.

More earnest heed. Notice we are not just commanded to hold the truth we heard. We are told to "give the more earnest heed". In other words, we should meditate more and more on the gospel. Not less. Not the same. We can't just hold the line but we must make progress. Spiritual progress must have a forward momentum. Remember Jesus said anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom. How do you become fit for the kingdom? It requires forward momentum toward the kingdom. You must remember the finished and completed work of Christ. You must constantly look forward to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom. This is having a view of the kingdom. This is demonstrated through Hebrews and the New Testament.

Overcomers in the body of Christ have forward momentum. They stretch forward to take hold on that for which Christ took hold on them. **Philippians 3:12**, *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."*

There is a reason God saved you. It is more than an escape from hell. It is to prepare you for something you can only get a glimpse of right now by faith. It is for the purpose of receiving an inheritance in God's kingdom so you may participate in an God'skingdom..

Who preaches about the judgment seat of Christ? Who preaches about the reward and inheritance of the Christian? Who preaches about God's kingdom coming? The Lord Jesus Christ did. The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ preached on this constantly. Why don't we?

It is because we have our minds set on things below. We have failed to set our mind on things above. We are preoccupied with this transient life in the body. We are caught up in provision and protection and worshipping ourselves. There is no time left for thinking about God's kingdom or preparing our soul to receive the reward and inheritance God wants to give us.

Christ died for us. He was buried. He rose again the third day. He ascended to heaven. He sits at the right hand of God the Father and makes intercession for us. He will return to the earth and reign as King over the nations.

That is not the end. We are only get a glimpse of what is coming. There is something much bigger beyond even these things. We can only see right now as far as the New Jerusalem.

What comes after that? God will make a new heavens and a new earth. We don't know much about that yet but we will get there. One day at a time. One step of faith at a time.

Let's keep our eyes on Jesus. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Hold tightly to what we have heard and never let the truth slip away. Live in expectancy of the return of Jesus and his kingdom.

Hebrews 2:2-4

Notice the contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament people received discipline or punishment when they sinned against God. If this was true in the Old Testament it is also true in the New Testament. Not only has God not changed his mind about sin but it is even worse when you know more about God and still sin. We sin against greater light of who God is, and therefore we have greater accountability. We should look at these verses and let it sink in so that we will fear and respect the Lord.

The gospel was verified by the Lord and those who were with him. We have their testimony of the truth. Their testimony was confirmed by signs, wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. God made sure those who trusted in his son Jesus had everything they needed to believe the gospel.

We have no less evidence today even if we have never seen a miracle. If we will open our heart we have seen the hand of God at work in our lives. I know I have. I have received God's mercy and grace in my life many times.

It is amazing that human nature is so stubborn and rebellious to continue in sin. May God have mercy on us.

I pray for my own soul that God would have mercy on me and save me from my own deceived heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We need to turn away from ourselves and turn to God with all our heart and mind.

I am thankful today that Jesus died on the cross in my place. I deserve God's wrath for all of my sins but Jesus took my place. He died in my place. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. He will return and establish his kingdom over the nations. May his kingdom come, may his will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Hebrews 2:5

It would be easy to skim over this verse and not feel the full punch of what this reveals. Let's start at the end of the verse: "whereof we speak". In these three words the apostle revealed part of his purpose in writing this letter of Hebrews. The apostle pointed toward a "world to come".

The Bible is preoccupied with the world to come. It doesn't focus the believer on living for the world system as it exists. Over and over we are reminded that the believer living today is only a stranger and a pilgrim. We are sojourners in this present world. Our true home is in the world to come. There is another world coming after the completion of this one. God is preparing people for the world to come. If we are willing to listen and receive what God is saying then we will also become preoccupied with the world that is coming. Listen to the false preachers of the apostasy today and they will try to get you living your best life now. This is self-worship. Our real life has not begun yet. We are not living for this present world. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? The implication is that the more of this world system you have the more of your soul you lose.

The world to come does not belong to angels. They will not be ruling over the world that is coming. Now, why do you think the apostle felt that was important? Men are easily deceived by the supernatural, and there are fallen angels active on this planet which entice men into false worship and false religion. We need to avoid any religion, doctrine, or teaching which has its roots in angels.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the alpha and the omega. He is the beginning and the end. Angels are his servants. Angels are sent to serve those who will inherit salvation at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should respect angels in the sense that they are powerful and work for God, but we should not stoop to worshiping angels or replacing our faith in God with faith in angels. It is a sure sign a person is influenced by demons when they are obsessed with angels.

Hebrews 2:6-8

The Lord Jesus is the second Adam. He is the representative for man and because he overcame we who believe in him have overcome. Why do we overcome? So we can receive inheritance. We become heirs and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus in his kingdom. What makes us worthy of this honor? There is nothing we can do to overcome in our will power, determination, or self effort. We simply believe the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. We put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he overcame we overcome in him. How do we get to this position of being in Christ? God the Father placed us in his Son when we believed the gospel. This is the work of God from beginning to end. He is the author and finisher of our faith. If there were any room for our self in this process we might find a reason to boast, or worse yet, we may find a reason to drown in self-pity at the long list of our sins. But it does not depend on us.

We believe in God the Son. We accept his word as the truth. When we agree with the truth that is in Jesus we are changed by the Holy Spirit. We are changed into his image one day at a time. We reflect him and the devil hates us for it. He wants to destroy the image of God in us. This explains why the further we travel toward the end the more unnatural and perverse mankind becomes. The heaven is making a sour batch for the end.

The apostle addressed the relationship of angels and the Lord Jesus. Jesus reigns over the angels, and yet in his humanity he needed the help of angels. The Bible records how angels helped him in his forty days wilderness trial. The Bible records how angels helped the Lord Jesus when he suffered in the garden of Gethsemane. Angels were actively part of the story which unfolded in the Bible. However, remember: there is a real danger in men worshiping angels and so sinning against God. Read **Revelation 22:8-9**.

Hebrews 2:9

In his humanity the Lord Jesus depended on the help of angels. Angels helped the Lord Jesus at the end of his forty days of temptation in the wilderness. Angels helped Jesus during his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was a man so he could represent man in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Christ died for our sins at Calvary. He suffered death in our place so that we would not suffer separation from God in death. Physical death is bad enough. But spiritual death and separation from God in eternity is far worse than physical death. When Jesus died at Calvary he took our place so that if we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior then we are saved. Christ died in our place.

Jesus suffered for us through his crucifixion and death. He was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead. He is now crowned with glory and honor. By the grace of God he tasted death for every man. Those who believe and receive Jesus Christ will benefit from what he accomplished. Those who reject the gospel and attempt to establish their own righteousness will suffer for their sins. The end of sin is always death. People do not understand that physical death is the beginning of death. Man is spirit, soul, and body. Death in the body is not the end of the soul. But spiritual death means complete and eternal separation from the giver of life. Eternal life is in God. Eternal death is separation from the Creator.

We cannot imagine the implications of this. I have listened to testimonies of people who claim to have had near death experiences. They had an experience of hell. If even a little of what they say is true I would not wish hell on my worst enemy. The Bible is clear that hell is a place of torment and never ends and there is no escape.

May the Lord help us warn, exhort, and help people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ so that as many people as possible can escape hell.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day according to the scriptures. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Lord will not turn away anyone who comes to him in faith and calls on his name.

Hebrews 9:27, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"*

Hebrews 2:10-12

All things were made for Jesus. God made all things for his Son Jesus Christ. All things are by him. By whom are all things. Everything that is made is from the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is bringing many sons to glory. He is the captain of our salvation. He was made perfect through sufferings. What does that mean? It means suffering is a normal and necessary part of the Christian life. Suffering serves a purpose. One picture I keep in mind is that of a blacksmith. In order to make a tool one must melt some steel, hammer the steel, and heat up the steel. Use that picture to understand suffering. Suffering conforms us to the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is the one who sanctifies us. Sanctification is the process of our soul being saved in the present tense. In the past tense we were justified by the finished, completed work of Christ (a work that secures eternal security for our spirit). In the present tense we are saved in our mind, will, and emotions (our soul). In the future our bodies will also be saved when we are resurrected and receive a new body. This is what is meant by "bringing many sons to glory". It is all based on a work done by Jesus. It is worked out in time through what Christ did, what he is doing, and what he will do in the future. God sees it all from beginning to end. We can only perceive the past through the memory, the present through physical sense, and the future by faith.

Jesus called us his brothers. We are one with the Lord. He is not ashamed to call us brothers, because we were placed in Christ Jesus and united with him by God the Father. God did this. We are recipients of what God did. We get the privilege of participating in what God is doing and will do.

Lift your voice and sing praise to God for the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. God is three in and one. Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, church, and the nations. Three days and all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 2:13-17

In order for Jesus to be a substitute for the sins of man he became a man. In order to completely identify with man he became a man. Jesus was one hundred percent a man. He is also one hundred percent God. We cannot wrap our mind around this but we believe by faith.

The devil had the power of death. Men are in bondage to a fear of death. From my experience I believe this fear is behind most of the reasons why people behave the way they do. They are afraid of losing their lives. This is what motives self justification. This is what motivates grasping after position, power, and prestige. Men believe the more position they have the more they will be provided for and protected. But those who know God know He is our provider and our protector. An earthly position of power and prestige does not give us true provision and protection. Those who think this way are short sighted. They are short sighted because they cannot bear to think of themselves lying dead in a coffin. The fear of death forces men to conform to the world system.

For the overcoming Christian life in the world is much different. Why does the overcoming Christian participate in the world at all? Why doesn't he go off the grid or become a hermit? Because God has a purpose for us being in the world but not of the world. Our purpose is to be salt and light. We are ambassadors for Christ.

The devil has power over those who are afraid of death. But those who believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are no longer afraid of losing their lives. They lost their life in Christ Jesus and were raised together with him. They are no longer trying to save their life or hold onto their life. They already died in Christ. Now they live for Jesus. Their life is tied in with God himself who is eternal life. Those who are in Christ Jesus will live forever. There is no fear of death for the believer.

Jesus fully identified with us in order to teach us not to be afraid of the end of the physical body. He rose from the dead to prove the devil is not in control. God Almighty is in control. We will live forever if we believe the gospel and put our trust in Jesus.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Hebrews 2:18

The Lord Jesus suffered. Whatever happened in the life of Christ can and does happen in the life of the Christian. Jesus said he was the master and that the servant would be the same as the master, though not necessarily to the depth or intensity of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus fully identified with us by becoming a man. As a Christian our goal is to fully identify with the Lord Jesus. Our goal is to become in increasing measure one with him.

This is why receiving forgiveness is only the beginning. Complete salvation and deliverance from self, sin, the world, and the devil is our goal.

Our goal should be the same as the goal of God the Father. What is God's goal for us? **Romans 8:29**, *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

We are being conformed to the image of the Son. The goal of this process is so that the Lord Jesus can be the firstborn among many brothers.

Suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. It is part of the material in conforming us into the image of the Son.

The Lord Jesus suffered.

One benefit of the Lord's sufferings is that he is able to help us when we suffer. When we consider what Christ endured it changes the way we interpret our sufferings.

Our suffering is no longer pointless or random. It has purpose. It has value. It is accomplishing something in our lives.

What is it accomplishing? It is conforming us to the image of the Son.

Paul saw another aspect of this process. Let us quote Paul's word on suffering: **2 Corinthians 4:17**, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

Affliction. Suffering. Persecution. Rejection. Being cast out. All of this works in favor of the Christian whose eyes are fixed on his Master. It works to our advantage to help us become one with our Lord and Savior. And that is the goal. That is the purpose. That we may be one with Jesus and one with the Father through him.

Hebrews Chapter 3

Hebrews 3:1-4

Those who believe the gospel of Jesus become participants in "the heavenly calling". Our calling is not an earthly calling. I've heard preachers today talk about having your best life right now. They talk about prospering in this current world system. However, this is not our calling. Our true calling is the heavenly calling which points beyond this temporary existence right now to eternal life in God's kingdom.

We are exhorted to consider Christ Jesus. Think about the Lord Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest. This is keeping with the theme of Hebrews, because the point was that Christ fulfilled all of what the religious systems in the Old Testament pointed to. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the office of the priesthood. He is our High Priest. He is, therefore, superior to anything represented in the Old Testament. Reading the Old Testament should only be read with the mindset of understanding the Lord Jesus Christ. It should not be read with the mindset of instituting a religious system with another priesthood or high priest. This is where the catholic cult went off the rails and became just another cult. There should be no place in the true church for people who title themselves as priests or popes. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest offering spiritual sacrifices to God by our faith in the completed work of Christ.

The Lord Jesus was faithful. A comparison is made between the Lord Jesus and Moses who was also faithful. Why is this comparison made? To show us, again, the superiority of the Lord Jesus over the Old Testament religious system and Moses. Even though Moses was faithful he could not hold a candle to the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses was faithful like a servant in a household. The Lord Jesus is faithful as the one who owns the house in which Moses was only a servant.

This showed that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. We see that he who built the house is the Lord Jesus and that "he that built all things is God". Jesus Christ is God. God the Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God. God is three in one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and the nations. In three separate seasons he reveals himself. At the conclusion of the third season all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 3:5-6

Moses was a servant in the house of God. He was a faithful servant. But when compared to the Lord Jesus we find Moses was a servant but Christ is the son over his own house. Christ built the house. He is the owner of the house. He is the son over the house. Moses was a servant in the house.

This shows a sharp contrast between the religious system under Moses which truly did point to Christ and then the fulfillment of that shadow in Christ himself.

The overall purpose of Hebrews was the contrast between the old and the new. The old was a shadow. The new is the reality. The Lord Jesus is the reality of everything the Old Testament pointed to.

Why did the apostle make this point over and over? Because people were tempted to go back to their old religious life. The religious life provided community which also gave provision and protection. At the heart of dead religious life is self worship and not the worship of the living God. Christ is the living God; not a dead religious system.

Hebrews applies to us today. We are surrounded by dead religious churches. These dead churches are more dangerous than outright paganism or heathenism. At least with paganism it is out in the open.

But dead churches who claim to be Christian are more dangerous to the spiritual life of the Christian. It took a word from God and a revelation from God to enable me to evade the trap of dead churches. Only those called out of the called out ones escape the trap of dead religion which culminates in a one world religion of anti-Christ.

How is this possible? Dead religion is the religion of anti-Christ. It is the religion of self exaltation. Dead churches and denominations magnify the names of men which is self worship.

Where there is a true church men do not bicker over doctrines and traditions of men. They worship God in spirit and in truth. Men do not lead the church. They follow and obey the Holy Spirit.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, "Jesus Christ is Lord", and you are saved.

Hebrews 3:7-11

Hearing the voice of God is underlined. It should be normal for a Christian to hear the voice of God. We have the Bible before us. We have the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through the scripture and our conscience. Is there other ways he speaks to us? The Lord has many ways of communicating to us. Paul prayed that those who received his letters would have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where does revelation come from? The Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus Christ to us. How can we understand unless we can hear?

Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. It is not enough to have heard but we must receive. We hear the gospel. We must receive the gospel. When God speaks we listen. We must receive the word he speaks to us. We need to remember what he said. We need to hold fast to what he said to us. God spoke to Abraham. He heard. He received. He believed. He remembered. He held God's word.

Israel heard but they did not believe or receive. God's word did not profit them. It is only when we hear, receive, and believe that we can profit from what God said and what he did for us.

If we do not believe what God says then we cannot enter his house. God's house is a place of rest. It is a place of fellowship, communion, and rest. Picture in your mind a warm fireplace and comfortable chairs. It is a place of rest. It is a place we enter by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. We hear the gospel, believe the gospel, and receive the gospel.

If we do not believe then we are left outside, separated from God, and like most men, waiting on God's wrath to catch up.

God speaks to us. We must listen to what God says. When he speaks listen to him and take it to heart. Remember the word God says to you. Hold fast to his promise to you. Do not let it go. The greatest word God ever spoke was his son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word of God. He is God's word to us. He is the promise of the Father. Cling to this word. Hold fast to the Lord Jesus Christ. Enter into the Lord and rest in this house with the Lord. He is our rest and he is our peace.

Hebrews 3:12-13

Notice who this verse is addressed to: brethren. The apostle spoke directly to brothers who were in the church. He said to take heed. Listen. What was the warning, what was the exhortation? The warning was to take heed lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. How is this possible? How is it possible that "a brother" can have an evil heart of unbelief?

When Israel heard God's word what did they do? They did not believe. They turned away and died in the wilderness and did not enter the promised land.

When Jesus appeared and spoke the word what happened? Many people turned away from him and complained he spoke "hard sayings". Who could listen to the hard things he said?

Those who could listen are those who chose to believe what he said.

A brother who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus is eternally secure in his spirit. His spirit is saved.

But he can depart from the Lord in his mind, will, and emotions. His mind can be taken over by the world system. He can give his mind, his will and his emotions to pursuing money, a name for himself, and the things of this world. It is possible for a man to call on Jesus and live just like everyone else in the world. He can be a religious, worldly man.

This is why we have this warning. Don't have an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Focus on those words: living God. There are people who claim and profess to be a Christian but they do not know the living God. Their God is a God of rituals, and doctrines, and boring, dead routines which they go through every week. They know the songs, they know the routines, they have all that down. But there is no living God in their heart. As far as they are concerned God created everything and set it in motion but has now disappeared. He is on vacation. He is sitting on his throne somewhere preoccupied with something else.

I've heard people describe God in that manner. They do not know the living God. They have no fear of God before their eyes. God is not active in their life. They go to church but they live like the world. They do not have faith in the living God. They have an evil heart of unbelief.

What is the cure for this? We are to exhort one another. Keep on exhorting until it is clear the brother is no longer listening to you. How can you tell when someone is not listening? Because they do the opposite of what you tell them. They do not listen. They do not believe you are speaking from God.

They think you are just another man with just another opinion. In other words they think you are just like them: someone who is out to make a name for yourself so you can provide for self, protect self, and worship self.

That man has an evil heart of unbelief. He does not serve the living God. He is serving a God of his own imagination. Do not believe their emotional pleas. Do not believe their tears. Do not believe the words that come out of their mouth. Read **Proverbs 14:7**.

Hebrews 3:14-19

Continue believing in the living God. There are some who believe and receive the security of their spirit. Christ died for their sins. They are justified by what Christ did on Calvary. They called on the name of the Lord Jesus at some point in their lives. However, they did not continue to believe to the saving of their souls. What does this mean? It means they gave their mind, will, and emotions over to serving the world system and their own self.

They believed in Jesus but they never became a disciple of Jesus. What happens to a person like this? Do they lose their spirit's salvation? I do not think it is possible to undo what Christ did at Calvary through his death, burial, and resurrection.

But I do think it is possible that a man can cheat himself out on what God offers in the kingdom. In the same way that Israel was saved out of Egypt but never entered the promised land a man can be saved in his spirit but his soul never transformed into the image of Christ.

Only those who become one with Christ and only those who partake of Christ himself will receive inheritance in God's kingdom. What happens to those spirits who were justified but never sanctified? What happens to those spirits who were justified but never had their soul sanctified?

I don't know the answer. I do know this. We need to work out our salvation (of the soul) with fear and trembling. We should not take for granted that going through religious routines is sufficient. We all know in our conscience that it is not enough. We need to press on to take hold on all that Christ took hold of us for. We know this.

The gospel of grace brings us the good news that our sins are washed away. However, many people do not press on to discover that God's grace also delivers us from self, from sin, the world, and the devil.

Let us press on. Let us not allow ourselves to have an evil heart of unbelief and depart from the living God.

There is only one way forward. It is by an active and aggressive faith in the finished and completed work of Christ. We must abide in the gospel.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. God the Father placed us into Christ and united us together with him. We are now dead to sin and alive to God. Walk in this truth. Live in this truth. Do not let sin be your master, but let the Lord Jesus Christ be your master from now on.

Hebrews Chapter 4

Hebrews 4:1

We are exhorted to fear. Why would we be encouraged to fear? Fear is not always a bad thing. It is good to fear a bear in the woods. It is good to fear a lion on the plain. It is good to fear a bandit in the night. Fear is a good thing if it helps us focus on a priority.

What is the priority in this verse? Entering God's rest. The fear we should have, therefore, is to fail to enter God's rest. Our fear should not be of losing our salvation. Our fear should be in failing to enter God's rest.

This is different from salvation in the sense of justification. There is nothing we can add or take away from the salvation of our spirit. We are secure by trusting in the finished and completed work of Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The gospel message is that our sins are forgiven and washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

This is not talking about the salvation of the spirit. We do not need to fear losing out with God because God is the one who secured the salvation of our spirit.

So, what is this? Why should we be afraid of not entering into this rest?

Rest is what happens after we accomplish something. What is the work we are to accomplish? God finished his work and rested. What is our work then?

Our work is to believe the gospel and to continue believing the gospel until it separates us from self, sin, the world, and the devil. We are to continue to press into the truth of the gospel. We are to hold fast God's word. In a few more verses we will get into the separation of the spirit and soul by the word of God.

It is only when we see this we understand the difference between the salvation of the spirit and the salvation of the soul.

The soul is the mind, will, and emotions. We can be born again by God's spirit in our spirit and receive eternal life. This does not guarantee, however, that our mind, will, and emotions are in agreement with God's word.

This is the work, then. It is agreeing with God's word. It is agreeing with the truth. Our work is to believe in God's son, the Word of God, the embodiment of truth. When we know the truth, and continue in the truth, the truth sets us free from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

This has been called sanctification. It is the work of believing God's word so aggressively we become peculiar to the backslid, lukewarm church folk around us. We stand in stark contrast to those whose minds are controlled by the spirit of the world system.

What is God's promise? It is rest. When does this rest come? After the day of work? What is our work? To believe the gospel. To trust in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ.

This work separates us. It divides asunder spirit and soul, bones and joints. It digs deep into us, showing us what is holy and common. It shows us how to walk in agreement with the Lord. It shows us how to walk in the spirit and not in the flesh. Walking in the spirit is walking in agreement with the truth. Walking in the flesh is to have our minds in agreement with the world system.

The gospel is simple. It will take your whole life on this earth to believe everything the gospel provides for you. It is eternal.

Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. This is the pattern. This is the way to God. There is no other way to God except through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:2-4

Let me start by focusing on the phrase "as well as unto them". We heard the gospel. Who else heard the gospel? "As well as unto them". This is pointing back to Israel. They heard the gospel! The gospel was preached to us and also to them. I've heard preachers say the gospel only applies to New Testament believers, but that is not what I see happening in this verse. The gospel was preached as well unto them.

But the gospel did not profit them. Why didn't the gospel profit them? Because they did not believe when they heard. But they were already saved. They had been saved out of Egypt. They were saved. They were on their way to the promised land.

But they no longer believed the word Moses told them. It got too hard for them to keep on believing. The wilderness was hot and even though God sent them food and water it was too hard. Their faith did not continue.

This reminds me of the parable Jesus told about the different kinds of soil where seed was planted. The seed is God's word. It is the gospel. But in some folks the word does not profit them. They do not bear fruit. They do not continue to abide in the vine. Why? They stop believing. They get distracted. Their life gets too hard. They look for some other way to solve their problems and find happiness.

If a man does not continue in the word he will not finish well. It is not as important how you start. It is how you finish the race that matters. You started out believing God's word. Are you now turning to some other method? Are you trusting in religious rituals? Are you trusting in yourself? Are you putting your faith in faith as an end in itself?

They did not keep the word in their heart because they stopped believing. Therefore, they could not find rest. They kept walking in the wilderness in unbelief and disobedience. There was no haven of rest for them. There was no end to their works.

God finished his work and then he rested. Our work is to believe the gospel and continue until we enter God's rest completely.

The pattern is to believe the gospel. This is our spiritual work. We hold on and abide in God's word. We do not accept unbelief, or the attitude of the world. We hold to the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not let go of him. Then when the time comes we enter into him and receive our reward. Our inheritance.

Those who abide in unbelief lose their reward. They may be born again but their soul was not transformed into the image of Jesus so they are of no use in the kingdom. They don't receive an inheritance.

The Bible says we should fear that we do not enter God's rest. If the Bible says to fear something we better think hard about it. What is there to fear? Why is God telling us to fear something? It is not hell in the context. It is not losing our eternal salvation in the context.

What are we supposed to fear? You should fear that having heard God's word you stop believing and your soul turns back to living like the rest of the world in pride, and the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. You should fear that your soul will not be walking in agreement with the truth when you leave your body.

The fear of the Lord is clean. It helps to focus on what is important. What are you focused on today? Read **Revelation 3:3,11**.

Hebrews 4:5-10

The Lord wants us to enter his rest. God's rest is an experience of trusting in the gospel to the point where you no longer rely on your own ability, strength, or righteousness. You see clearly there is nothing you can do to commend yourself to God and so instead trust completely in the completed work of the Lord Jesus to justify, sanctify, and to one day grant you a glorified body.

The word "today" still applies to us, and God still speaks to us and wants us to find rest in him. There is no rest outside of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing this world can offer that will truly bring rest to the soul. Only in Christ can we find the peace which passes all understanding.

A man who enters God's rest no longer tries to establish his own righteousness through good works. True enough that good works flow from a heart grateful for God's mercy but a truly saved man knows his good works do not save or justify him before God.

Good works are important. But God's grace comes first. A man is saved by faith in Jesus. He rests in the finished and completed work of Christ. When he is seated and at rest then he will produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Any other lifestyle will only bear the poisoned fruit of Cain and the world system. We cannot enter by our good works. We only enter rest by trusting in the work Christ accomplished at Calvary.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Call on the name of Jesus. Allow God to wash away your sins in the blood of the Lamb.

Hebrews 4:11

Here is an interesting verse of scripture. We are supposed to labor so we can enter "that" rest. How do we labor to enter this rest? The rest of the verse gives us a clue. You fail at entering rest by failing to believe.

Jesus was once asked the question, "*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*" (**John 6:28**) Notice and think about the answer Jesus gave (**verse 29**), "*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*"

The work of every believer is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one work we are called to. If we will do this one work we will enter God's rest. The Lord Jesus Christ is God's rest. Everything in all creation and in all Israel and in all history and the future is summed up in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our rest is the Lord Jesus Christ. The seventh day, or Sabbath, was a symbol pointing us to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. People who enjoy religion get caught up in focusing on the seventh day but the seventh day of rest is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfilled it all.

Our only work is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What happens in our life as a result of believing in Jesus? **John 7:38**, "*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*"

This living water is also known as the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in and through the man who works at believing the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does all the other work that needs to be done through the life of the one who works at believing the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is all I have to do. This is the one great work of my life. To abide in Christ. To enter this promised rest. To enter into and abide in him and to live in him and to walk in him.

Jesus tried to teach people this over and over in different ways. He said to eat his flesh and drink his blood. He said that he is the vine and we are the branches. It is the same lesson. Christ is all and all. All we need is Jesus. He is everything to us. Outside of him we have nothing but our own dark soul which is an endless abyss of darkness.

Let the Lord Jesus fill you completely with his Spirit. Open your heart and believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Enter this rest for your soul.

Matthew 11:28-30, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*"

Hebrews 4:12

This is an important Bible verse. It is one of the Bible verses which really stood out to me when I first started reading the Bible, even though I did not know why at the time. It gives us a glimpse into how God's word changes those who put their faith in Jesus. God's word is alive. It is powerful. It is sharper than a two edged sword. It pierces us to the very soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and discerns our thoughts and intentions. What does this mean?

The word of God shows us the difference between our thoughts and the thoughts of God. What God says is true. Most of what we think and say is just our vain imagination. The word of God is alive. Jesus Christ is alive, and he is God's word. When we accept Jesus we are agreeing with the word of God. We are agreeing with the truth. Many times we will find that agreeing with the truth will condemn us. We must take the side of Jesus even against ourselves. This is what Jesus said when he said we must

love him more than we love our own family or love our own self. Our love for Jesus will seem like hatred to our unsaved family or worldly friends. They cannot comprehend what motivates us. It is because we agreed with the truth and the truth in Jesus changed our minds about who we are, who they are, and what the world is all about.

We no longer worship self like our family. We no longer live for self. We cling to and agree with and live for the word of God. As a result, there is a separation which takes place between the soul of man and his spirit. The spirit agrees with the truth. Over time the mind, will, and emotions are brought on side with the spirit as we stay in God's word. The Christian who does not abide in God's word will turn to the world system in their soul, and their soul and spirit never are divided from one another. They are Christians who live completely for the flesh, and they are ruled by their worldly minds. The mind of the unbeliever can never accept God's word. But the man who calls on the name of Jesus must continue to call on him and agree with the word of God. Without God's word continually working in our spirit and soul we will conform to the world instead of conforming to the image of Jesus Christ.

God's word not only affects us spiritually, but it also affects us in every way, even in our physical bodies. One day God will raise up these bodies and the new creation will be a resurrected body like the Lord Jesus Christ. In God's creation a man is spirit, soul, and body. All are important to God. All will continue through eternity. We will have a body, soul, and spirit. We are made in the image of God.

Many times I have thought one way and the word of God showed me I was wrong even though what I thought might have been a good thought. God's word goes deeper than what is right and wrong. It shows us the difference between what is life giving and what brings death. Many things in churches which people think are good are actually spreading spiritual death. Only someone who continues to agree with God's word can tell the difference. Those who hear God's word and turn away can no longer see the difference between religion (spiritual death) and a relationship with Jesus (spiritual life). The picture of the two trees in the Garden of Eden give us our earliest glimpse of this truth.

Let us continue in God's word and not turn aside. We must carry on and continue in God's word until we are fully conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:13

The phrase in this verse "with whom we have to do" points to the truth of our personal accountability to God who made us. God made us. Therefore we belong to him. Therefore we will give an account to him who made us and who owns us. When we paint a picture we put our signature on it and it belongs to us. We belong to God because he made us. Not only did he make us but he also bought us back from sin by dying in our place at Calvary. Therefore God owns us twice over. We will give an account of our lives. There is no changing the fact that we will stand before God and give an account of our lives.

This is not a judge who relies on second hand testimony or evidence. This is a judge who saw and heard everything we did and everything we said. Nothing is hidden from the eyes of the one to whom we will give an account. God sees it all. He knows it all. Everything in life is visible and open before the eyes of God Almighty to whom we belong and to whom we will give an account.

The eyes of the Lord are on every man. There is no man hidden from his sight. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and the wicked. Every man will stand before God and give an account of his life.

Here are some scriptures about God's judgment of men: **1 Peter 4:5, Romans 14:12, Matthew 12:36, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 20:11-15.**

A question you should ask is how to get your name written in the book of life. How can you be saved from the lake of fire? Believe the gospel! Read **Acts 16:30-31**. The gospel is simple. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Romans 10:9-10,13**. You are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the work he accomplished at Calvary through his death, burial, and resurrection. You are saved by faith and through God's grace toward you. Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in him as your Lord and Savior. Call on the name of the Lord. Continue to trust in the good news that your sins are forgiven, that you have been saved from yourself, from sin, from this world system, and from the devil. Continue in Christ Jesus and the gospel and grow in God's grace and in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:14-16

You never know what a day may bring forth. You never know when your time of need will come. It springs out of the shadows like a mugger, ready to pounce, ready to beat you down with a baseball bat. I've felt it. I know what it is like to be blind sided, bushwhacked, beat down by people you thought were your friends but threw you under the bus in a moment. I know. It is human nature. The hearts of men are deceitful and full of wickedness. Cain rose up against Abel and slew him. This is the story of the human race.

There was another man who did not rise up against his brother but instead gave his life. Jesus came into this world and became our great high priest. He is now passed into the heavens, but is actively involved in what happens to us. Because I know this, I do not give in to depression, despair, or despondency. I do not give in to self-pity, or hatred towards those who do me wrong. Instead, I turn the other cheek. I forgive those who have so spitefully used me and abused me, slandered me, and wiped their feet me. I forgive them. They do not know what they have done. I commit them to God and I trust that the Lord will do what is right.

Jesus is my defender, protector, and provider. The Lord will defend me against those who make themselves my enemy. He will take care of those who cursed me. I pray God will have mercy on them because I know how angry God becomes against those who persecute his people. I know because I can read the Bible. God curses those who curse his people. He blesses those who bless his people. I know what will happen to those who did me wrong. They will not prosper. The hole they have dug? They will fall into it. The stone that have rolled? It will roll back on them. The seed they have sown? They will reap it. May God have mercy on their souls and open their eyes to what they did so that they can humble themselves, and repent, and find mercy from their Creator.

Jesus went through this. Everything that happened to me Jesus went through it. He knows the pain, heart break, tears, the shock of betrayal. He is touched with the feeling of everything I have experienced. He will never leave me. He will never forsake me.

Therefore I go boldly to the throne of God's grace to find grace and mercy in my time of need. Today I am in need. I know that God hears the cry of my heart, and he sees what Satan did to me. He sees it. He sees every person Satan used and those who participated. He sees it all. I commit my life into God's hand. Into thine hands, Father, I commit my spirit. Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way. In Jesus name.

Hebrews Chapter 5

Hebrews 5:1-5

Jesus was given the position of high priest by God the Father. In God's kingdom men do not receive positions because they earn it but because God chooses whom he will give positions. God gave the Lord Jesus, his Son, the position and responsibility of being the great high priest.

The high priest in Israel was taken from among men. He had a job to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. But the Lord Jesus offered himself, once and for all, to purge our sins and to satisfy the justice of God forever.

Priests were people who should have compassion. They were just as weak and sinful as the people they offered sacrifices for. They should not think they were better than the people they served God on behalf of. Unfortunately, those infected with the world's spirit of pride will always think they are lords over God's heritage.

Men do not call themselves to ministry. Only God can truly call a man to serve him. There are many people who say they serve God but only God knows those who are his.

The Lord Jesus did not glorify himself but glorified the heavenly Father. We should not glorify ourselves or praise ourselves. That is the way of the world. People who do not know God worship themselves. They are self worshipers. They are fixed on their own provision, protection, and self worship. They are controlled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. They do not know that God is our provider, our protector, and our portion. All they know is what they can see which is passing away. This world is passing away.

God said to his Son: "*Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.*"

God has a son. His name is Jesus. He is our high priest. He is living right now, making intercession for us as our great high priest. There is only one mediator between God and man, and that is the man Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 5:6-7

We do not need any more priests to help us to know God or be right with God. There is only one priest for us now. This priest is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is our great high priest.

What is the order of Melchisedec? I've seen people get caught up on these scriptures about Melchisedec, but the point here was that the Lord Jesus was similar to Melchisedec. This Old Testament priest, who showed up before Moses, did not have a beginning or end. He was a great man because Abraham paid tithes to him and he blessed Abraham. So, in a way, this man was greater than Abraham. Who could this man be? The scripture does not come right out and say this was Christ himself in pre-incarnate form.

Instead, the point was that Melchisedec provided a Bible example of the Lord Jesus. He was a type of the Lord Jesus. He foreshadowed and pointed to the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that this scripture is in the book of Psalms, before the Lord Jesus was born. This is a prophecy in the book of Psalms about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next part described how the Lord Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. We see this in the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. God heard the prayers of the Lord Jesus. It says God heard him because Jesus "feared". I believe this means he had reverence for the heavenly Father. This is how we should be when we cry out to God. We should have reverence toward God. The word fear is not a tormenting fear where a person cringes. Instead, it points to an attitude of humble submission and worship toward God our creator.

The Lord Jesus set the example in how to pray. We should cry out to God. We should not be afraid to cry tears and call on the name of our heavenly Father.

Hebrews 5:8-10

Jesus learned through what he suffered as a man. Even though he was the Son of God he still went through a learning process as a man. In every way the Lord Jesus identified with man. He suffered like a man. He learned through his suffering. One idea which can help us is to realize that God can use human suffering to teach us. No one likes to suffer but there is good that can result from suffering if we have faith and trust in God.

The Bible shows us clearly that suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. In almost every book in the New Testament we read the account of Christians suffering for their faith. We can also read the doctrine of suffering through Paul's letter, and Peter's letters. Peter spent a lot of time in his letter addressing the subject of suffering. Read **1 Peter 2:19-21**. These verses make it clear that suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. Anyone who preaches that if Christians have faith they would not suffer have not truly studied the Bible in context. If we would read the New Testament in context we would find that Jesus predicted that Christians would suffer, that the apostles in the book of Acts suffered, and that in the apostolic letters we find the doctrine of suffering.

The church has a long history of suffering. This history can be read in "Foxes' Book of Martyrs". Also, more modern testimonies of faith under fire can be read in books such as "Tortured for Christ" by Richard Wurmbrand, "The Hiding Place" by Corrie ten Boom, and the testimony of Jim Elliot who died as a martyr and as a missionary to the Auca Indians in South America. These are a few I am aware of and can recall, but I am sure there are many Christians who could share a testimony of suffering.

I heard a preacher say that in the last hundred years there was more persecution and martyrs in the church than all the other centuries combined since Christ ascended to heaven. I do not know if this is true but I expect the closer we get toward the end the enemy will intensify his efforts to destroy the church.

We must be vigilant. Our adversary prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. We should expect that we shall face persecution, suffering, and situations where our endurance and patience will be further developed.

What is one purpose in all this? God wants his children to be conformed to the image of his son Jesus. If Jesus learned obedience through suffering then it goes without saying that we will suffer and learn obedience.

Hebrews 5:11-14

It is not always the preacher's fault if people do not grow in their relationship with the Lord. Here was an example of where the preacher wanted to go on and preach the deeper things of God but his congregation was not ready. They were dull of hearing. Over time, if we are not careful, we can lose interest in the things of God, even though we continue going through the routine of church and showing up every Sunday. But we quit listening. We quit receiving truth. We lose our love for truth and become preoccupied with the work week. We don't listen because our mind is full of worries, anxieties, and fears.

These Christians listened to the preacher so long they should have been able to teach others. Instead, they were still babes in Christ. The passing of time does not indicate spiritual growth. I've run across a few senior citizens who thought because they were elderly they were spiritual or smart. However, we know that without having a love of the truth and striving to put God's word into practice we do not grow. Our spiritual growth is not measured by time. People can put in four years at college and not learn anything. They put in time. I've seen this in the work place. I've seen people who spent a lifetime at a place and had little skill in their profession.

The analogy of meat and milk was used. A baby can only digest milk. But a grown man can eat steak. The message is to grow up so we are able to digest truth a new Christian cannot digest. We need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the context of Hebrews the "milk" was man's religion. The apostle tried to get them out of religion and into a relationship with the Lord Jesus. This does not happen by a routine of religion. It comes by careful hearing, receiving, believing, and exercising yourself to obey truth. The longer we agree with the word of God the more insight we have and the stronger we become in grace and truth.

We should never stop growing spiritually. We need to stay in the word and prayer, not just Sunday, but every day. Not having enough time due to work or family is not an excuse. Set aside time to draw near to God, worship God, and listen to his voice and put into practice what he teaches us.

This is an exhortation to leave behind man-made religion, routines, rituals, and go on to live the true spiritual life of faith in the gospel, reliance on the Holy Spirit, and a constant spiritual gaze upward to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who believes that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord is saved. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus today and be saved from sin, self, the world, and the devil. Jesus is returning again to this earth and he will establish his kingdom over all the nations. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Hebrews Chapter 6

Hebrews 6:1-3

What is milk? What is meat? Milk was basic doctrine such as repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgment. This was the milk of basic Bible teaching. Anyone who was saved for a little while should know these doctrines. This is milk for new believers.

What is sad is that I know these doctrines are not even taught to new Christians in the modern church. It is rare to find a preacher who even teaches these basic Bible doctrines. Instead, what fills pulpits today is new age teachings, doctrines of devils, psychology, self-help, and self-worship. Truly we are living in the last days when there is a great departure from basic Bible truth.

We should learn these basic principles and then move on to the meat of God's word. The meat in Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is exalted over all religion. God gave Israel their religion in the Old Testament, but this religion was supposed to point them to the reality of their Messiah. When their Messiah arrived they loved religion more than the Messiah and rejected him. But to those who did believe in Jesus he gave them the power to become the sons of God.

We learn more and more that the meat of God's word is the Messiah himself. Continue steadfastly to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

The application of the gospel and depth of the gospel is lived out in a deeper way as we learn from the Holy Spirit how the gospel applies to our every day life. Paul began to dig into the application of the gospel in Romans and Ephesians. We find out the gospel went far beyond the forgiveness of sins and actually saves us from self, sin, the world system, the devil, and from death.

I have nothing against teaching basic Bible doctrines. I wish more preachers would cover the basic doctrines of Christ. However, I also long as the apostle did to continue on to perfection.

What is perfection? The Lord Jesus Christ himself is perfection. We should press on to know him more and more.

No man can truly teach us about Christ. We only learn about the Lord Jesus in the school of the Holy Spirit. If we are willing to go on and learn of Christ the Holy Spirit will reveal him to us.

There is a price to be paid. The price for growing in the Lord is losing friends, family, religion, and sometimes your job. You may lose everything in your pursuit of knowing Christ Jesus. The Lord said this would happen to us and the apostles repeated this message. Read **2 Timothy 3:12, John 16:33**.

Are you willing to pay the price to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you satisfied with church as usual? Press on to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

Hebrews 6:4-6

I think it is easy for people to misunderstand these specific verses. On the surface it might appear these verses imply a man can lose his eternal salvation. However, I do not think salvation is in view here.

If we look at the context of Hebrews we see Hebrew Christians tempted to stop living as Christians and return to the synagogue. In other words, even though they were born again they wanted to return to the world system, (religion is included in the world system). As a result, they would no longer have a testimony of Christ and would be unable to produce spiritual fruit.

When a Christian stops agreeing with the gospel and instead bargains with religion he no longer actively partakes with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is contrary to the world system. The Holy Spirit is life but the world system (religion, included) is death.

Those who continue with the gospel continue to taste the goodness of God's promises and have their heart set on the kingdom. However, when a man turns to religion or the world his heart no longer is set on the kingdom. In other words, this man lives according to the principle of self-worship instead of worshipping the living God through Christ Jesus.

Did he lose his eternal salvation? I do not think so but he is one of those saved "as through the fire" and loses inheritance and reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

Repentance means we stop agreeing with the world system and worldly religion and instead agree with the gospel. When we stop agreeing with the gospel we put ourselves under the world system again.

It is impossible to live according to both principles. This is how Jesus put it: "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" (**Matthew 6:24**)

I don't think eternal salvation is in view in these verses. I think it is a statement of fact: a man cannot live for God and himself at the same time. He cannot worship God and worship himself at the same time. Worship of self includes self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship.

When a Christian agrees to live according the world system and worship self then his testimony becomes "Christ Jesus is not enough".

This is putting the Lord to open shame. Our testimony should always be that the Lord is our provider, our protector, and our portion.

This is difficult when a man is an outcast in society. Those outside the Hebrew society were outcast and did not have government, economic, or social support as the common Jew did. Being a Christian meant you were outside of the support systems. The Christian only had God to protect him, provide for him, and be his portion.

This same issue is before every Christian and not just the early Hebrew Christians.

Is our testimony "the Lord is my provider" or do we live in fear of man and what man can do to us?

I have suffered greatly at the hands of men who were filled with the spirit of Satan. I have suffered greatly but through my suffering I have learned obedience and my testimony remains: "*God is my provider, my protector, and my portion forever*".

David put it very well in **Psalm 23**. *The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want.*

Remember, if the devil cannot take away your salvation he will try to prevent you from having a testimony.

How does he do that? He tempts you in these three areas always: provision, protection and portion. These three areas fit in with the evil spirit of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. (**1 John 2**).

Meditate on this and if you understand this you will avoid traps and snares Satan puts out there for Christians.

Do not make agreements which will cause you to sell your soul to the world for money or protection. Do not worship yourself and so be ensnared. Do not love yourself. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind. Worship God! Do not worship yourself.

Worship of self is the foundation of the kingdom of darkness. Avoid it by putting all of your trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 6:7-9

The examples point to bearing fruit. Plants or trees produce fruit. That is the analogy. The interpretation is that in the life of the Christian there should be evidence of spiritual life.

A Christian is spiritually alive so their life should testify of spiritual life. This analogy coincides with my previous comments that this section of scripture is not talking about eternal salvation but it is talking about a fruitful life which receives a reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

A Christian who bears spiritual fruit will be rewarded for his faithfulness. The only way a Christian can bear spiritual fruit, however, is to continue to walk in agreement with the truth of God's word. At whatever point the Christian fails to agree with the Lord he will not bear spiritual fruit.

He can even cause spiritual death if he aggressively promotes the principles of the world system, which is what is currently happening in American mega churches. All of the fruit which comes from agreement with the world system will be burned up, like thorns, briers, or dead branches.

Jesus taught us about this as well. Read **John 15:6**. Abiding in Christ is as simple as agreeing with what he says. If at any point you disagree with the Lord then you are no longer "abiding in Christ". Instead, you put yourself outside Christ and can no longer bear spiritual fruit. You bear the fruit of the world system which is spiritual death. Everything that is spiritual death will be cast into the fire. The destination of everything that is spiritual death is the lake of fire.

Is it possible to bear the fruit of spiritual death as a Christian? Is that not what this passage is saying right here in Hebrews?

Look at the verses. He is talking to Christians! He warns them not to be briars, thorns, and dead branches. Jesus says if you do not abide in him you become a dead branch. The end result of dead branches is fire.

I believe once a Christian is saved he is saved forever. With that being said I also believe the works "*done in the flesh*" (done in agreement with the world system principles) is burned in the fire of God's judgment. The Christian's soul or spirit is preserved through the fire but all his life's achievements and works are burned up. He wasted his life living for himself instead of living for God. He invested himself in his own provision, his own protection, and loving himself more than he loved God. Read **1 Corinthians 3:13-15**.

Jesus warns about this over and over in his teachings. The spirit of a man who calls on the name of Jesus is eternally secure. But his rewards, his inheritance, and his place in God's kingdom is not secure. A believer should be very concerned about this. I cannot stress this enough. Do not go back to religion and turn your back on the living God. Do not make your agreement to live like the world system, which is at the root self-worship (pride and unbelief).

Here is another warning from the New Testament about losing your inheritance in God's kingdom. Remember, this is preached to Christians. Remember, a Christian does not lose his eternal soul. Salvation is eternal. However, what happens to the Christian who lives according to the world system? Read **Ephesians 5:3-7**.

You might say an idolater is not a Christian. However, if a Christian cannot be an idolater why was Paul teaching this to Christians? Yes, Christians can be idolaters. How? When you stop agreeing with the Lord. When you think you know better than the Bible, scripture, or the Lord. People do this ALL THE TIME. As a matter of fact, Christians barely read the Bible because they think they already know how to live for God as a Christian! This pride is a symptom of an idolater. People think they are smarter than the Bible. This lack of interest in reading and studying the Bible is not just apathy or a lack of time. It is pride and unbelief. Pride and unbelief are idolatry. You are worshiping yourself rather than worshiping God.

The unbeliever worships. He worships himself. How do I know that? Because he thinks he is smarter than the Bible and the God he claims not to believe in. He is an idolater. He worships his own intellect and mind. He is, in effect, worshiping himself.

But Christians do this as well. By ignoring the Bible, by disagreeing with what the Lord Jesus says, and by ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to their conscience. My guess is that the majority of people in churches live this way every day. They think following rituals, or showing up once a week in a building alongside their fellow idolaters makes it OK. It does not. They do not believe what they hear and they do obey the voice of the Lord their God. They prove by their actions that they do not believe what they profess.

God is merciful. When a man cries out to Jesus then God saves that man. But who can stand before the Lord Jesus at the judgment seat of Christ and receive an inheritance? I will tell you who will. Those

who overcome. The remnant who believe God's word and keep on believing God's word even if it costs them everything in their life. Even if they lose everything they still cling to their faith and will not turn their back on Jesus.

Continue in the word of God. Here are some exhortations from scripture to continue in the word, in the truth, in the faith. Please read **John 8:31, Acts 14:22, Romans 11:22, Colossians 1:23, 1 Timothy 4:16, 1 John 2:24, 1 John 2:28.**

Hebrews 6:10-12

Let's think about what is stated here. God is not unrighteous. He will always do what is right. He does not forget our work and labor of love which we have done in his name. He remembers our service for him. He knows what we have done. Always remember we are working for the Lord and not for man. We do not work to earn a paycheck but we work to please the Lord. Our work is always for the Lord. It is not for man. It is not for ourselves. It is for the Lord. And the Lord will repay us for all of our work. He will make sure we are fairly compensated for everything we do. We need to stay fruitful and productive. God will reward us and take care of our needs.

Colossians 3:23-24, *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."*

We are serving the Lord. He will reward us. Work for the Lord. Let your work be done always serving the Lord. How will this affect your work ethic? I've found that when I keep in my mind that I am working for the Lord I always do a good job.

Other people criticize me but I know my conscience is clear because I did the best I could. I am getting older now. I am sick and in bad health. I did the best job I could. The Lord knows I did the best I could. The Lord will take care of me. He is my provider.

We should never be lazy in life. Instead, be diligent to do what God puts into our hand to do. The Lord will take care of us if we serve him. Our place of service to the Lord may change but we are serving only one employer. He is the Lord Jesus. No matter where I am in life I will serve the Lord.

Hebrews 6:13-15

God gave Abraham a promise. Abraham patiently endured until the promise was fulfilled. We see a similar pattern when God speaks to someone. The promise Abraham obtained was his son Isaac. Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob who became Israel. Through the nation of Israel God fulfilled his highest promise: the seed of the woman - the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's promise has a larger application. We see the beginning of God fulfilling his promise in Abraham's son. God promised the seed of the woman. This points forward to the seed of Abraham. The apostle Paul interpreted this for us. **Galatians 3:16**, *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."*

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the seed promise given to Abraham. God fulfilled his promise to Abraham and there is more in the Kingdom when Jesus returns. We will see the fulfillment of God's promise to

Abraham concerning the land. All the land promised to Abraham will be given when Jesus sits on the throne in Jerusalem.

God blessed Abraham and multiplied his family. Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons who multiplied and became the nation of Israel. As God said, Abraham's descendants are more than the stars and more than the grains of sand.

There is also a spiritual fulfillment in those who believe the Lord Jesus from every nation. All who believe in Jesus are spiritual descendants of Abraham.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

Hebrews 6:16-20

Here we learn about God's character. It is impossible for God to lie. When God gives his word we have strong consolation. Those who take refuge in the Lord have hope which is an anchor for our soul. This hope is sure and steadfast. Our hope is the Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 15:13.**

Many times we are afflicted with disaster. Tragedy strikes and we feel we cannot go forward. But God gives his word. He gives his promise. It is impossible for God to lie. We are comforted knowing the Lord provides, protects, and is our portion. The Lord will accomplish his plan for our lives. **Jeremiah 29:11.**

The Lord Jesus is our great high priest. He intercedes for us. He made us clean through his completed work at Calvary. Now he prays for us. He prays that when the enemy comes to sift us that our faith will be strong. He prays we will not be overwhelmed. Instead, we overcome. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony and we love not our lives even unto the death. **Revelation 12:11.**

Has God given you a promise? He gave a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He gave a promise to Joseph. He gave his promise to Joshua, and Moses, and Samuel, and David. He gave his promise to the prophets who knew his name and proclaimed his word. He gives his promise that his church will not fail. The gates of hell shall not prevail against his church.

If we believe in Jesus we are now in his church. If we believe God raised Jesus from the dead and confess that Jesus is Lord then we belong to him. He will complete the good work which he started in us. The Lord will not fail. He will finish what he started in our lives. **Philippians 1:6.**

The Lord prepares a place for us. He will receive us that where he is we may be also. Let us continue to look forward to all that the Lord has prepared for us. **John 14:3.**

Hebrews Chapter 7

Hebrews 7:1-3

The apostle circled back around to Melchisedec. Melchisedec was an example of the Lord Jesus. He was a type of Christ. The apostle used the illustration of Melchisedec because he predated the nation of

Israel, Moses, and the Levitical priesthood. He was a priest of the Most High God and was a good parallel of the Lord Jesus because he was the king of peace and he was the king of righteousness.

This demonstrates Old Testament scripture which predated the nation of Israel pointing to the Messiah. I believe the Messiah was prophesied by the Lord at the fall of man when God said the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. From then on we see the Bible is one cohesive arrow pointing to the Messiah of God. Any other view of scripture misses the point. It's all about Jesus.

The Lord Jesus abides a priest continually. He is the great high priest who is at the right hand of God and lives forever. He makes intercession on our behalf. The Lord Jesus prays for us. This is an encouraging thought to me. The Lord Jesus prayed for Peter. He told Peter that Satan would sift Peter like wheat but Jesus prayed for Peter. He prayed Peter's faith would not fail. The Lord Jesus prays for us. He knows the trials we endure. He is touched with the feelings of our weakness. He knows the hardship we endure and all we go through in this life. He tasted it as well. Read **Hebrews 2:18, Psalm 56:8**.

Hebrews 7:4-10

The apostle pointed out that in the Bible the account of Melchisedec came before and preceded Moses, Israel, and the Levitical priesthood. He pointed out that the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior to the Levitical priesthood because Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec and also Melchisedec blessed Abraham. Two thoughts to keep in mind. Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec because he was a descendant of Abraham, therefore he was lesser than Melchisedec. Also, since Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec this made Abraham a lesser man than Melchisedec. All of these points build the case that Melchisedec represented a priesthood which was superior than what came under Moses and the Levites. He was superior to all God outlined in Israel. Why was the apostle making this point over and over?

He was driving at the fact that the Lord Jesus is a priest forever after the same manner as Melchisedec. Some even speculate that this Melchisedec was the Lord Jesus literally. I don't think it is necessary to believe that in order to get the point the apostle made. The apostle of Hebrews was proving in a logical fashion, using scripture, through principle, and precedent, that there existed a superior high priest and priesthood. Melchisedec represented something superior than what was seen in Israel. He outlined that the Lord Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the types, shadows, and figures seen in Israel and the Levitical priesthood. Now that we have the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we no longer live under the Old Testament religious system.

There are many cults and religious movements today that try to drag Christians into bondage to Old Testament law or practices. They try to return to the Hebrew way of life which was described in the Old Testament. But this is totally wrong. People who do this are fallen away from the gospel of grace preached by the apostles in the New Testament.

We have everything in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is all we need. He is the fulfillment of every law, type, figure, and shadow in scripture that pointed forward to Jesus. He fulfilled everything. He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. Jesus dotted every "i" and he crossed every "t" in scripture. God the Father placed us into Christ and we are now made complete in him. It is vain to go back and strive to follow the law. The Holy Spirit lives in us and he fulfills God's law through us as we yield to the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is not about striving to follow laws or rules. It is about yielding and surrendering to

the Holy Spirit. This is the difference between dead religion and the spiritual life. **2 Corinthians 3:6**, *"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

Flee from dead religion. Flee from the religious system of man-made traditions and rules and laws. Seek the Lord Jesus and he will be found. He will not turn away anyone who comes to him in simple faith. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus and be set free.

Hebrews 7:11-16

We know since Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day that we are no longer under the Mosaic, Jewish, or Old Testament law. Look closely! There is made of necessity a change of the law. What law are we now under? Comparing scripture with scripture it is not hard to figure out that we are no longer under any of the law in the Old Testament but are now under the law of Christ! What is the law of Christ? It is the law of love. We are to love God and to love one another. And this is impossible to do unless we are filled with the Holy Spirit and have the power of God within us.

There are religious movements who want to bring Christians back under religious law. They do this by teaching Christians about Hebrew history, or tradition, or Hebrew religion. They imply this will make you a better Christian. This is the same lie told to Christians in the first church and why we have the letter to the Galatians in order to combat this evil spirit of religion.

Notice the apostle made it plain that the purpose in mentioning Melchisedec was to provide a Bible precedent to prove that Jesus is superior to Hebrew religion or priesthood. It is not necessary to believe Melchisedec was divine but he was described in a figurative manner to make a point from the Bible regarding the Lord Jesus. The entire point of the book Hebrews is to prove the superiority of the Lord Jesus over the Hebrew religion so people would not be deceived by this. May the Lord give us discernment so we are not deceived by any religious spirit today.

Another point was that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. Under the Mosaic dispensation there were no priests who came from Judah. The Lord Jesus is our high priest forever. He is our intercessor and high priest. He is praying for us now. This is one thought which encourages me a lot. I am so glad the Lord Jesus prays for me like he prayed for his disciples and all those who would believe the gospel.

Hebrews 7:17-19

Who is testifying? God Almighty is testifying. He said Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

By saying that Jesus is "in the order" only means the Lord's high priesthood can be proven from the Bible by the precedent set by the account of the man Melchisedec. Melchisedec was a Biblical precedent. When scripture sets a precedent then it can be used to prove the truth of a matter.

People do this in the legal world with past court cases or decisions by judges in the past. Here the apostle used the account of Melchisedec as a precedent to drive home his point that Jesus Christ is now our high priest forever.

The Old Testament religion of the Hebrews was fulfilled completely in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does this mean God did away with Israel or that there is no future for Israel? Absolutely not. (Read **Romans 11**).

God will fulfill his promise to Israel and give them the land he promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was an unconditional promise by God to Abraham and did not depend on the performance of Abraham or his descendants. (**Genesis 13:15**). Later, God did make conditional promises to Israel under Moses which were dependent on Israel's obedience, but God's promise to Abraham was without conditions. The Lord Jesus will return and sit as King over all the nations and Israel will occupy the promised land during the millennium age as it is written.

The kingdom age on this earth will endure for 1,000 years, or a millennium, and then all will be completed in the New Jerusalem.

Notice he said the law made nothing perfect. Even during the time of the Old Testament nobody was made perfect through the law given through Moses. This law was only a teacher to demonstrate to men that they are sinners and in need of the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. The law pointed sinners to the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Galatians 3:24**).

The gospel brings in a better hope than the law of God. The gospel shows us God devised a plan whereby men can be made right with God. Men are sinners and God is holy. How can God continue to be holy and yet still forgive men their sins? There needs to be someone standing between God and men. We need a mediator. Even Job recognized this and the book of Job is said to be the oldest recorded book in the Bible. (See **Job 9:33**).

God has provided himself a mediator for us. He gave his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **1 Timothy 2:5**.

Jesus is our great high priest. He is our intercessor. He is the mediator between God and man. God is just and he is also the justifier of those who believe the gospel. Read **Romans 3:26**.

Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Hebrews 7:20-24

The Lord Jesus became our high priest with an oath from God. The oath is included here as a quote from the Old Testament. **Psalms 110:4**, "*The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*"

The apostle interpreted the scripture from Psalms as being fulfilled in Jesus. The Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy. The argument made here hinged upon this scripture in Psalms and the account of Melchisedec in Genesis.

Under the Lord Jesus we have a better covenant. In the Old Testament God made a covenant with Israel based on the law given to Moses. In the New Testament we receive a better covenant based on the

finished work of the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. This is an unconditional covenant based up the completed and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament priests died. In the New Testament our priest, the Lord Jesus, lives forever. The New Testament in Jesus never ends because Jesus lives forever.

The priesthood of the Lord Jesus is unchangeable because he lives forever.

Every man is a sinner and needs a Savior. We are in need of the work the Lord Jesus accomplished. We can benefit from his work by believing the gospel and calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father and makes intercession for us. He will return again at a historical future point and will rule over the nations of this planet for 1,000 years. After this is finished then all will be completed in the New Jerusalem. God will then create a new heavens and a new earth and those who trusted in Jesus to save them will live with God forever.

Hebrews 7:25-28

The oath points to scripture in Psalms which uses Melchisedec to describe the Son of God. The Son of God saves to the uttermost anyone who comes to God by him. He lives forever to intercede for them. What does "uttermost" mean? It means he justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies us. He saved us, he saves us, and he will save. He saves us: spirit, soul, and body. Nothing is left out. He redeems, justifies, cleanses, purifies, heals, and carries it to completion. God finishes what he starts. He never leaves or forsakes us. He does not turn anyone away who comes to him through his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. It is through him we draw near to God. God hears us when we come to him by faith in Jesus.

Jesus never stops praying for us. He sees each detail. He knows what happens before it happens. Every joy, sorrow, surprise, and tragedy. He sees all. He knows the end from the beginning. Nothing is hidden. He knows each sparrow who falls. We are of more value than many sparrows. He counts the hair on our head. He knows our thoughts. He hems us in behind and before and lays his hand on us. There is nowhere we can escape his notice. He hears our cry. As a father pities his children so the Lord pities those who fear him. He does not deal with us after our sins. As far as the east is from the west so far he removed our transgressions from us.

He has a plan for our life. It is a good plan. It is not evil. He will see to it that we arrive at the desired haven. He will carry us if need be. He watches over us. He is a shepherd who leads us. We are provided for. He lead us into green country and beside quiet water. He restores our soul. We mount up with wings as eagles. We run and do not grow weary. We walk and do not faint.

Though our body perishes yet the spirit is renewed every day. We do not look at what is seen but at what is unseen. What is seen is temporary. What is unseen is eternal. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Hebrews Chapter 8

Hebrews 8:1-6

The apostle summarized everything he said already and put all the facts together so the main point was not missed.

The reason he wrote this letter was to encourage Christians who were Jews that their faith in Jesus was legitimate. He convinced them of these facts by using Old Testament scripture and proved through the Old Testament that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. He is the great high priest for Israel and indeed he is the high priest for all of humanity.

It is made even more clear in these verses that everything which God gave Moses when he set up the Levitical priesthood was a picture pointing to the reality in Christ Jesus. Everything God gave Moses was after a pattern of what was in heaven. However, what Israel had was only a copy of the reality in heaven. The great high priest who truly took away our sins was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is the real great high priest. He is the mediator of a better covenant. Why is it better? Because it does not rely on fallen man in any way whatsoever. It is better because the heavenly covenant is completely the work of God from beginning to end. It does not rely on a man to build or sustain anything. It is a house and a temple built by God himself.

The Lord Jesus has a more excellent ministry, a better covenant, and better promises. Everything Israel had was just a shadow of the reality which is only in Christ Jesus. God used Moses and Israel to paint a picture of something that was in heaven. But now heaven has come to earth in Jesus Christ. Now all that was in the Old Testament fades away because reality came to us in Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's word in the Old Testament. True believers do not live according to the law in the Old Testament. They live by the power of the Spirit given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are one spirit with the Lord and no longer rely on the flesh or ourselves. We died with Christ, were buried with him, and are now raised up together with him to walk a new life. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed. All things have become new. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Hebrews 8:7-13

Here we read verses which quote **Jeremiah 31:31**. It says clearly the prophecy in **Jeremiah 31:31** is the new covenant which the Lord Jesus instituted at the Last Supper. Jesus said he made a New Covenant in his blood. This is the fulfillment of **Jeremiah 31:31**. Jesus made this covenant with Israel. All his disciples were of Israel. Yet Gentiles were grafted in as well. We have examples of Gentiles being grafted in from the Old Testament. Ruth the Moabitess was grafted into Israel. Rahab was grafted in. These Gentiles were grafted in because they believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. There were always people, whether Jew or Gentile, who believed in the one true God, the most high God, and by faith in him adopted into his family.

There are natural born in Israel who did not believe. There were Jews in the time of Jesus who did not believe his word and showed by their unbelief that they did not belong to God but were of the devil. The same is true today in the modern, outward church.

Notice the difference in the old and new covenant. The old covenant was external and written in stone. The new covenant is internal and written on the heart of believers. This shows the difference between external religion and a genuine relationship with God. Those who believe the gospel and abide in Christ enter God's house which is also called God's rest. It is a place where we cease to strive and rest on the fact he is pleased with the completed work of his Son Jesus Christ. All was completed for us by what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. There is nothing we can add to this, and there is nothing we can take away from it. Our part is to believe, and receive, and respond to the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He speaks to us now. He does not speak to one man. He speaks to all of his sheep. His sheep hear his voice and follow him.

The old covenant under Moses fulfilled its purpose. Its purpose was to teach men they were sinners and needed a Savior. Now the Lord Jesus reveals himself as our Savior and we believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is all we need.

Hebrews Chapter 9

Hebrews 9:1-2

The tabernacle was a figure of the reality in heaven. Everything within this tabernacle pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle gave an overview of the tabernacle. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the purpose of the tabernacle. This stood out to me because the tabernacle was an outward expression of who God is. It is clear that the ark revealed the nature and character of God.

What stands out to me was that there was one sanctuary but within this there were three parts: candlestick, table, and shewbread. The entire tabernacle was a clear picture that God is one God in three persons. Notice the examples of three in one presented in the description.

The worldly sanctuary was an outward, or visible, representation of a reality which exists in heaven. We cannot see the reality with our physical eyes but this tabernacle was a picture of that reality. The real fulfillment of everything within this tabernacle is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord revealed who he is. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear we should discern who the Lord is. When we know the Lord we understand the world and we understand human relationships.

When I understood the Lord then I understood the world around me. This world system around me is a counterfeit of who God is. It is upside down and an inverted copy of who God is. When I say "world system" I am talking about government, business, and society. The spiritual side of this machinery is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. (1 John 2:15-17).

When we understand the Lord then our lives gain meaning, purpose, and peace. Rejecting the revelation of God leaves a man in darkness and results in spiritual and mental anguish. Read **Isaiah 55:6-8**.

Hebrews 9:3-5

I want to pause and think about a topic that is not exactly in the context of the purpose of this letter. Sometimes there are layers in scripture which we can explore besides the top most layer. The layer I

want to ponder in these comments is summed up in asking the question, "what do these verses tell us about the nature and character of God"?

I see three elements in this one ark. The ark was described precisely as containing three elements, which are: golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant. There are three elements in this one container. I believe this was a picture of the "three in one" nature of God. Further, I think we can also see the three tent poles God used in the Bible to erect the house of faith. Those tent poles are three roles: prophet, priest, and king. Those roles are represented in three distinct periods of time in which God progressively reveals who he is to man. The first was Israel which corresponds to the prophet. The second is the church which corresponds to the priest. The third is the nations which corresponds to the king. Take another look at these three elements and ask which one corresponds with which role and time period.

The tables of the covenant, of course, represent the first day, which is Israel, and also the prophet. Aaron's rod that budded represents the second day, which is the church, and also the priest. The golden pot of manna is the third day, which concerns the nations under King Jesus. The third day is the day of the King. It is the 1,000 year millennium in which Jesus will reign as King over the nations on the earth.

Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, church, and the nations. Tables of the covenant, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna. This third day, the pot of manna, ties directly to the phrase "*hidden manna*" in **Revelation 2:17**. It is in contrast to the "public" manna which Israel ate in the wilderness. This hidden manna is about something in the future that has not yet been revealed but which those who are "overcomers" can even now eat and participate in.

This is the most important thing, besides the gospel, that I have ever learned from the Holy Spirit. It is my burning desire to share this with others who have ears to hear, and a heart to receive the revelation of God who is three in one.

God is three in one. Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, the church, and the nations. Three days, and then all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 9:6-10

The tabernacle and service was erected as a temporary system until Messiah arrived. It was a figure which pointed forward "until the time of reformation". This reformation was when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, fulfilled the Old Testament. He is the prophet Moses said would come. He is the high priest pictured in the religious system of the Old Testament. He is the King which Israel looked forward to who will reign over the nations.

Since the high priest was only able to enter once a year into the holiest place of the tabernacle the Holy Spirit said while this first tabernacle stood men had no free entrance to the throne of God's grace.

It is only after this religious system was done away with and men believed the gospel that they obtained freedom to come to the throne of God's grace to find grace and mercy to help in time of need.

The Lord Jesus made a way for us to approach God with confidence. We do not approach God on the basis of good works or our righteousness. We can only approach God's throne of grace on the basis of

the finished and completed work of Christ. We go to God in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

He who has the Son of God has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. This is the only way to know God, commune with him, and receive his mercy. We can only find the mercy seat in the holiest place by faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

Everything God gave Israel in the service of the tabernacle revealed who God is, how man can relate to God, and was a picture which pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we understand this and believe the truth we are set free from religious oppression. We no longer need a man to stand between us and God. We do not need any man to forgive our sins, hear our confession, or do anything for us. Jesus did it all for us through his death, burial, and resurrection.

We have direct access to God through the finished work of Christ. Because of what the Lord Jesus accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection we can now approach God with confidence and receive everything for this life and the life to come. God has reconciled us to himself through his son Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-14

The religious system in the Old Testament is considered dead works. Religion is dead works. Rituals, systems, or observance of days is dead works. Anything a man thinks he can do to add to or take away from what Christ accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection is dead works. The Lord Jesus did everything for us.

The Lord Jesus is our high priest. He has a perfect tabernacle which is not made by human hands. The sacrifice he offered was his own sinless, perfect blood which was shed on the cross of Calvary. He was buried, and then on the third day he rose again. The Lord Jesus ascended to heaven and offered himself without sin or spot to God. He has purged us from all of our sins so we can have a clean conscience and serve the living God.

From these verses we learn Jesus was sinless. This shows that he was fully God. He was also a man because his blood was shed on the cross. Jesus is fully God. Jesus is fully man. He is the God Man. God is one God in three persons. He is Father, he is Son, and he is Holy Spirit. Three persons. One God. God is three in one. Any other teaching, including modalism, denies either the humanity or the divinity of Jesus Christ. If he is not God then he was not sinless. If he is not man then he could not have been a substitute for men. He is both God and man.

It is crucial for us to see this. Jesus offered himself to God, meaning the Father in heaven. What are the implications of this? Here in these verses we also have "through the eternal Spirit". In these brief verses we have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cannot allow people to trick us into thinking the doctrine of the Trinity is non-essential. It is absolutely essential. The truth of the gospel is tied in with the truth that God is three in one. Also, remember the blood mentioned here is vital. Without blood there is no forgiveness. **Hebrews 9:22**, "*...without shedding of blood is no remission*". Remember the gospel. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 10:13; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 16:30-31**. Do not add to the gospel. Do not take away from it.

Hebrews 9:15-17

The word "testament" might be easier understood in English as a "will". When someone is preparing for death if they have property or have final wishes they make a document called their "will". This includes distributing property, resources, or wishes on how their funeral service and burial will be conducted.

With that in mind let us read these verses again. The Lord Jesus is the one who mediates the new "will" of God. He puts it into place. Moses was used by God in the Old Testament to be a mediator of the old testament "will". That will was put into effect with the blood of animals which were sacrificed.

However, the new "will" is put into place by the Lord Jesus Christ and his death on the cross of Calvary. Jesus died in our place, he was buried, and he rose again. Through this process the new will is put into action. The old was fulfilled in Christ and when he died the old will died with him. When Jesus rose from the dead the new will of God was put into action.

A will is never read or acted on until the death of the person who made the will. When Jesus died his will was put into motion. When he rose from the dead it was put into action. He is now the mediator of a new testament, a new covenant, a new will. We are no longer living under the Old Testament. We now live in the day of the New Testament. Those who try to live according to the Old Testament are uninformed, or at worst, purposely deceiving others for the purpose of gaining a following.

Another part which stands out to me is the phrase "the promise of eternal inheritance". It is interesting to do a study of the Bible and understand what inheritance means to Israel, and also to the church. Understand the differences, and also understand what is common with the word "inheritance". Does a Christian automatically receive an inheritance? If so, why does Jesus warn believers, and his own disciples, and the churches in Revelation about losing their reward (inheritance). Why does the apostle Paul warn that a Christian can be saved "as through fire" and lose reward?

Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God unto our salvation. Be a participant in the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

Hebrews 9:18-22

The Old Testament religious system included animal sacrifices. The significance of these sacrifices was the shedding of blood. The lesson was that the wages of sin is death. Only blood can atone for sin. This was why the Lord Jesus had to die on the cross for our sins. He is our blood atonement.

This is why all religions outside the gospel of Jesus Christ are completely false and devil-inspired. There is only one way sin can be atoned for. Sin can only be washed away by blood. Specifically, the only thing that can wash away our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ. He is our atonement. He was the Lamb of God sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven and washed away.

The religious system in Israel was a type pointing forward by faith to this ultimate sacrifice and atonement which the Lord Jesus made for us at Calvary.

People who are offended by the requirement of the blood atonement reject the holiness of God. They do not understand that God is holy and that he is completely separate from sin and cannot excuse sin.

The only answer to sin is death. There is no alternative. God himself is eternal life. Sin is separation from God so it automatically brings death. Sin is spiritual death, soul death, and physical death are rolled into one. Those who are spiritually dead in their trespass and sins due to unbelief will be eternally separated from God (eternal life) when they die physically. Once we leave our body the soul can only continue in the direction in which it was already heading. Death will not turn us around or cause us to repent. We will just continue in the direction we were already heading.

The blood atonement made by the Lord Jesus is the only hope of escape from eternal death and darkness. The abyss of darkness will automatically suck the soul of every unbeliever straight to hell fire. The only hope to escape this fate is to call on the name of Jesus Christ, to trust in his atonement, to believe the gospel: *Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Hebrews 9:23-26

The Lord did not go into an earthly tabernacle to offer his sacrifice but instead he went into the heavenly tabernacle to offer himself to God once and for all. These verses point to the truth that the work which Christ accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection is complete. It will never happen again. What he did was once and for all. It is finished. It is complete. The Lord will never go through the crucifixion again because this one sacrifice is sufficient for all eternity.

On this truth we take our stand in the finished and completed work of the gospel. This is why it is so important we maintain that no one can add anything to the gospel, and no one can take anything away from the gospel. It is finished. Men who attempt to add their own works to the gospel do not comprehend what Christ did for them. Our only work now is to believe in the Lord Jesus whom the Father sent into this world. He is our salvation. He is eternal life. He is our righteousness and our sanctification and our redemption. He is everything we need for this life and the life to come. 1 Corinthians 1:30.

There are religious movements trying to turn Christians back to living like a Hebrew or a Jew. But this is unnecessary and dangerous. This is what Paul warns us about in the letter to the Galatians and throughout his epistles. He made it clear that when Jesus died on the cross he nailed God's law to the cross. The law of God is fulfilled in Christ. The entire religious system, including observing of days, was fulfilled in Christ. Now, we are only to live by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. We live by the Spirit now. We do not live according to the law. The law could never impart spiritual life. Spiritual life is a gift from God. Spiritual life flows from deep within, out of our spirit, and affects our daily living in such a way that we supernaturally in a natural way express obedience to God through walking and living and agreeing with the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews is an exhortation to Christians who are tempted to turn back to dead religion or religious ritual or religious systems. People have different motivations for doing this. Some are sincere and zealous in a desire to follow God and are deceived into thinking that observing special days, or wearing special clothing, or observing certain rituals will make them more holy or spiritual. It will not accomplish that goal. The only way for a man to become more spiritual is to live by faith in the gospel: the finished, completed work of Christ Jesus.

The gospel is simple. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Read Paul's application of the gospel in the book of Romans, especially in chapters 6-8, in order to understand the practical application of the gospel to the life of the believer.

Abide in him. Stay in the gospel. Do not add to the gospel, and do not take anything away from it. Jesus is Lord. God raised him from the dead on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of God as our high priest and lives forever to intercede on our behalf. He is the only mediator between God and men. **1 John 2:28; Revelation 22:18-19; Hebrews 1:13; Hebrews 7:19, 25**.

Hebrews 9:27-28

Reincarnation is a lie. The teaching that our soul is recycled and comes back as an animal or plant or something else is a lie. What does the Bible say? It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment. There is no second chance after you die to come back and try again to do better or improve. This life is all you get, then you die, then you are judged by your Creator.

Since this is the reality and the facts of life, then what should our reaction be? We should fear God and make sure we find out what we are supposed to believe and do while we still have time in this body. After you leave this body it is too late. Your chances will be over. There is no second chance to change your mind after death.

The Lord Jesus offered himself one time to bear our sins. He died on the cross for us so that we would not suffer the penalty of our sins. However, it is only those who believe and receive and remember the gospel who can benefit from what Christ did. Christ died for every person who ever lived, but only those who believe in Christ will benefit from what he did. God gave us free will. We can choose to either believe or not believe. God gives us plenty of room to go our own way. Just remember, if you turn your back on God, you will still stand before him one day and give an account for your life. You will not escape your judgment day.

There are Christians who are looking forward to the return of the Lord Jesus. There is a promise here for those Christians. Unto them that look for him shall he appear a second time. He will not return as a lowly Savior to die on a cross. He will return to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also.

I want to be ready, waiting, and looking for him when he returns. I do not want to be ashamed at his return. I want to be confident that when he comes I was looking him, I believed in him, I longed for him. This attitude must be cultivated by staying in God's word, by praying every day, and by choosing every day to believe God's word over your own opinions, emotions, or what the world says. The world will constantly try to conform you into its mold. Resist this. Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Renew your mind in the truth. The truth will set you free.

Jesus is returning again! Whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we need to be ready. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain will join them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Let us comfort one another with these facts.

Hebrews Chapter 10

Hebrews 10:1-4

All of the religious activity in Israel with sacrifices never solved the sin problem. Religious sacrifices were a reminder of sins. Their conscience could not rest easy by rituals and sacrifices. Why? Because the religious sacrifices was a shadow of the good things to come. Those sacrifices could never make the people who gave them perfect. It was not possible that the sacrifice of animals could take away sins.

The only way that they or us today could have our sins taken away was for the Lord Jesus to fulfill those types in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the Law and the purpose of the religious sacrifices. Through the sacrifice of himself once and for all he put away all of our sins forever. He became the sacrificial lamb for our sins. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He is our atonement. He is our substitute and through him God wiped away all our sins.

How can we benefit from this today? By believing the gospel and trusting in the Lord Jesus God will wash away your sins. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Humble yourself before God and believe the gospel. The Bible says that if a man confesses with his mouth that "Jesus is Lord" and believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead that he will be saved. **Romans 10:9-10,13**. It is simple as that. Why don't people choose to believe this good news?

Satan blinds people (**2 Corinthians 4:3-4**) from hearing and receiving the truth. Human nature is by default on the side of the devil, and will lean toward unbelief and rejecting the gospel. That is because everyone born into the world since Adam and Eve were born sinners. We were born into sin. There is no hope of being reconciled to God outside God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in **John 14:6**, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Acts 4:12, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

Believe the gospel. Trust in the Lord Jesus. Commit your heart and life to God and seek the Lord Jesus. There is no other way to be saved. There is no other hope of heaven outside the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 10:5-10

The apostle took prophecy in the Old Testament to prove that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament. The part which stands out to me is this: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Everything in the life of a Christian is based on the finished and completed work of Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. We were justified by his work, we are sanctified by his work, and we will be glorified by his work. All this is the work of Christ from beginning to end, and is all contained in what Jesus accomplished through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Forgiveness and atonement is an important aspect of this work. Along with atonement He also saved us from ourselves. He saved us from the world system. He saved us from Satan. He sanctified us and made us holy.

Because of the work of Christ the Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer to make him more holy. How do we respond to the work of the Holy Spirit? Our part is to believe the gospel and when the Holy Spirit puts his finger on anything in our life we say, "Lord, you are right. I am wrong." And then we trust in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us, purify us, and make us holy. The purpose of God the Father is to conform us to the image of his Son Jesus Christ. This is a work which was accomplished in eternity through the finished work of Christ.

As we walk through time in these mortal bodies the Holy Spirit applies the work of the Lord Jesus to us. It is our part to believe in the gospel. We abide in the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again. Don't allow family, friends, enemies, the world, or any devil to move you from your simple faith in the Lord Jesus.

I had friends who were moved away from the simplicity of the gospel with disastrous results. I had one friend who lost his life after he backslid away from faith in the living God. This was a warning to me, to never, ever turn your back on the living God, but fear the Lord and worship him only.

Do not worship yourself by living for self. Do not seek to exalt yourself in any way by making a name for yourself or seeking a title or position. Don't try to be somebody. Rest in the Lord and trust in the Lord that he is your life. He is all I need.

Hebrews 10:11-18

Our sins were washed away through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There is no need for another sacrifice to be made. Notice where the Bible said Jesus is now. He is at the right hand of God. The Lord's enemies will be made into his footstool. In other words, a time will come when all those who oppose the Lord Jesus will be under his feet.

This points forward to the return of the Lord Jesus. All the nations of the world will be under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will reign over the nations with a scepter of iron. Read **Revelation 19:15**. The Lord Jesus will return at a future historical point in time. He will set his feet on this earth again. He will judge the nations. He will judge each individual. Everyone will give an account to the Lord for their life.

It will be during that thousand years of earthly kingdom when Israel will receive the fulfillment of the promises made to the nation of Israel. The church will be there during this thousand years as the bride of Christ. After this thousand years is over Satan will be let loose one last time. He will gather all the nations of the earth in rebellion against the Lord Jesus and will attack Jerusalem. This will be the last battle. God himself will destroy the enemies and cast Satan into the lake of fire forever.

After this the New Jerusalem will come and God will make a new heaven and a new earth and will be with his people forever.

Hebrews 10:19-22

In the Old Testament the high priest entered the holiest place within the tabernacle once a year. However, Jesus is now our great high priest and he entered into the heavenly holy place once and for all. Now the brethren of the Lord Jesus can have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus made a way so we can draw near to God with confidence. He will listen to us. He listens to us. He does not listen because we earn it or deserve it, but because the Lord Jesus died in our place on the cross. God listens to us because of the blood which Jesus shed on the cross. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He is now at the right hand of God waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool. He lives forever to pray for his brethren.

Notice the descriptive words used: "new" and "living way". This way of approaching God was not always available. It is only now since the finished work of Christ that we can approach God in the holiest place. We can now draw near to God's mercy seat and talk to him in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. He will hear us because of the atoning work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we can draw near to God with a true heart that does not have a bad conscience. Our conscience was cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. If we relied on religious rituals or good works then our conscience would trouble us because men know that religious ritual and good works do not cancel sins. But when a man hears the gospel and believes then he finally has relief. The spirit in man will witness to him that the gospel is true and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin and unrighteousness.

We were washed; we were cleansed. The blood of Jesus once and for all cleansed us. The word of God renews us and cleanses us each day as we read, study, meditate and encourage each other in the truth in Jesus.

The message in Hebrews is good news. We should encourage our hearts with the truth in this letter and never submit to the lies of the devil. Rituals and religious systems are not necessary for eternal life. All we need for eternal life is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Call on his name. He died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Folks enjoy using this verse to beat fellow Christians over the head in regard to missing "church" services. I totally agree we need the body of Christ for our own spiritual well being and also as a way to serve others and contribute. However, I take issue with the definition of what people call the "church". Most folks when they say "church" refer to a denominational building where people file in, sit in a pew, put money in a plate, and listen to a sermon. That is what I see in what folks call "church".

The Lord shows us what church is. He said where two or three gather together in his name that he is there with them. I often found more edification and opportunity to help someone when it was only myself, one another, or two other people. Those are precious moments when the Holy Spirit has the true freedom to encourage, exhort, and comfort us.

I cannot remember being in a "church", listening to one man read his sermon, where I felt that way, or had the opportunity to impart a spiritual gift as well. This is what the true church is supposed to be. A gathering of believers who all have the opportunity in the meeting to impart to others a spiritual gift. If

you go into a meeting and it is only a one man show then it is not a biblical, New Testament church meeting. It is a religious meeting. This style of religious meeting was passed down probably from the religion of the Catholics.

Those who condemn by saying "forsake not the assembling" should also remember that this verse also says "consider one another" and "exhort one another". How can I consider and exhort others if church consists of sitting in a pew and listening to a preacher give his opinions on the Bible?

Some churches see this problem and they attempt what is called "cell" home groups or home meetings within the context of the traditional man-made church. This is just putting a band aid on the real problem. They still want to hold on to their salary, budget, and their building. They still try to make a name for themselves instead of making the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

Don't be deceived. Most of what people call "church" is just a religious branch of the world system. Jesus would say the same things to the religious leaders of today that he said to the religious leaders in his own day. Woe to you hypocrites!

May God send revival to this country again. I became a Christian at the end of the Jesus people revival of the 1960s and 1970s. I was saved through a ministry which was born during that time of revival.

I hope that God sends another revival and raises up a new generation of Holy Ghost radicals who throw off all man-made religion and get back to basics of New Testament church life.

Hebrews 10:26-31

There is a stern warning in these verses. Up until now I don't remember a more straight forward and stern warning in the book of Hebrews.

The apostle reminded the Hebrew Christians of the God who took vengeance and who was to be feared. It is fearful to fall into the hands of the living God. There was a comparison here between how God judged people in the Old Testament, and it is startling to discover that God's judgment is more severe and swift in the New Testament dispensation.

The apostle's point here was that the greater revelation we have the more accountable we become. Christians in the New Testament have a much greater accountability than Israel did in the Old Testament. Look at how God judged Israel, and realize that was the Lord dealing with people who were not as accountable as we are today. This should instill the fear of God in our hearts.

Also, another basic truth is the fact that we have no other way to be reconciled with God except through the Lord Jesus Christ. If we reject the gospel of Jesus Christ then we have no other way to be reconciled with God. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through the Son Jesus Christ.

There is no other sacrifice for sin except the sacrifice which Jesus made on the cross of Calvary. There is no other way to be saved except by faith in the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. To turn your back on the gospel is to condemn your own soul to an eternity separated from your creator. God is light and God is love. What is the result of separation from light and from love? It is more terrifying than anyone alive can imagine.

Continue in the gospel. Do not be moved away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not follow philosophy, psychology, or world religions. Everything outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a lie and comes from the father of lies. Stay in the gospel and be saved and have eternal life.

Hebrews 10:32-39

The apostle appealed to their previous show of faith and sacrifice to encourage them. This was a good way to persuade people to endure. Remember what you already endured! Look at what you already went through. When we look back at how far we have come it is an encouragement to endure until we finish the course. It is not enough to begin the journey. We must also complete the journey. God's grace enables us to continue forward one day at a time. We look to Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith.

These Hebrew Christians suffered persecution. They also associated themselves with others, including this apostle, who lost everything because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. The apostle now reminded them of the price they paid for their faith. Are they now going to let that history of suffering be for nothing?

Notice we receive a principle for enduring the loss of material goods. The Christian should not be holding onto material possessions but instead focus his mind on the enduring treasure laid up in heaven. The Lord specifically taught his disciples to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break in and steal. But rather store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves cannot break in and steal. Where our treasure is our heart will be also.

The Lord Jesus and the apostles were united in their message regarding money and wealth. They underlined that it is safer to be poor and have great faith. Most Christians will not have an abundance because there is a high probability of being corrupted by wealth. James even went so far as to say it is the poor who are rich in faith.

The apostle said the return of the Lord was in a little while. If we measure time from a human perspective it does not seem to be a little while. But the Bible does not measure time like we do. Time is measured according to God's standard of measurement. The scripture says with the Lord a thousand years are like one day. The Lord does not measure time like men do. We cannot say, therefore, that the proclamation of the Lord returning "in a little while" is false. From the perspective of eternity what happens on earth seems like a little while. How will you or I measure time after we have been in heaven for a million years? What will be a "little while" to you then?

The message is to be patient, endure and continue to have strong faith in the Lord Jesus. We have heaven to look forward to. We have the return of the Lord to look forward to. These promises are not far off. They will happen in a little while. It is our part to believe and patiently endure.

Hebrews Chapter 11

Hebrews 11:1

This chapter provides a long list of heroes from the Old Testament who overcame by faith.

My question is why talk about faith? So far, the apostle used Old Testament scripture to prove that Jesus is the great high priest for believers and that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament.

But now the subject seemed to change. The apostle switched from proving facts about Jesus to trying to inspire the Christians who suffered for their faith in the Lord Jesus. He turned to Old Testament examples to encourage and comfort and exhort the Hebrew Christians to continue to have faith in Jesus and not give up or give in.

He began by defining faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What are the things he already said in Hebrews we are look forward to?

He pointed us to heaven. He pointed us to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith we can take hold on these great truths to bring stability and endurance to our soul. We grasp these great future events by faith right now. When we do so it produces endurance, perseverance, and patience in the face of an unrelenting world system which hates God and persecutes Christians.

Faith is evidence of what we cannot see. We are exhorted not to look at the things which are seen because the things which are seen are "temporary". Instead, we are to look at the things which we cannot see because the things we cannot see are eternal.

It is impossible to grasp this except by faith. But we can have faith. We can hear the truth, receive it into our hearts, and by faith hold the promise of God's kingdom and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another thing I want to talk about in this chapter 11 of Hebrews is the picture of faith portrayed here in contrast to the American mega church prosperity faith promoted by false preachers.

The faith in this chapter is not about money, or wealth, or health. It is about seeing an invisible kingdom and then enduring whatever the world throws at us because we see beyond this temporary world we live in now.

Notice in the examples given some people overcome temporary persecution or difficulty, but others died or lived in caves and holes in the ground. All were commended for their faith. What kind of faith is this? It is not a faith rooted in what we gain for ourselves in this fleeting few years of life on earth. It is a faith rooted in the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the beginning and the end of this faith. Jesus is the object of this faith. It is not faith in faith. It is not faith in ourselves. It is not faith in having a positive mental attitude. It is faith in the invisible kingdom of God where we are heading if we believe the simple gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. All who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Hebrews 11:2-3

When God created the universe he spoke. His word framed everything created. We know Jesus is called the Word of God. Everything that is created was made by Jesus Christ. Read **Colossians 1:16**.

There is a visible world we can see, hear, feel, taste, and touch. There is also an invisible, spiritual world. The Bible constantly speaks of this invisible world around us. Here we learn that the things which are visible were not made "of things which do appear". In other words the visible world around us was created by an invisible pattern. God's word can be heard, but when he spoke his word, a visible creation came into being. The visible world originated from the invisible word of God spoken by the Father.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in the creation of the visible world. We know from scripture that Jesus is the Word of God. If anyone has eyes to see they can look around at the natural world and it testifies to the nature and character and personality of God. Read **Psalms 19:1-2**.

Man is unable to create in this fashion. Man can only use what God already created and fashion, combine, and blend it. But man cannot create something out of nothing. Man cannot speak things into existence. This is the great error of the positive confession and prosperity gospel. Men are not gods. There is only God. Read **Isaiah 43:10-11**.

God is the only one who speak things into existence. Not men. Those who attempt to do this are practicing a form of witchcraft and are employing the help of evil spirits to change the natural world around them. Devils have limited supernatural power and can effect changes and make things happen. Men are deceived, however, into thinking that what they "confess" makes these things happen. It is a deception of the devil to make men think they have magical powers. This was translated into the Christian world and called "faith" but the methods and practices are the same as witchcraft or sorcery.

Do not be deceived into believing that a positive confession will bring you health, or money, or peace in life. Only the Lord can give you these things if it is his will. From reading the Bible I believe most of the time for Christians it is not God's will to give them more resources than what they need to live on a daily in dependence on him as their provider, protector, and portion.

Read **James 2:5**. That verse speaks volumes to the false priorities of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel fills men's hearts with idolatry and covetousness. It should be completely shunned, and everyone who preaches it, and those who refuse to repent of that false gospel.

God created the heavens and the earth. He did this by speaking his word. God can also speak into our individual lives and cause things to happen that we never could have made happen for ourselves. Trust in God and let him work things out in your life. Let us surrender to God in every situation in our lives and ask him to speak his word into our life and situation. The Lord is able to do a much better job than we can. Am I suggesting we be passive? No, I think a man who aggressively seeks God in prayer is not being passive. He just knows that without the word of God he is helpless and he waits on the Lord to see what God will do for him. He stands ready to hear the word of God spoken to him and when he

hears he springs into action to obey the voice of the Lord. Jesus said his sheep hear his voice and follow him.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 outlines the gospel for us. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. Everyone who believes in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord will be saved. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He will return again and establish his kingdom upon this earth. Each one of us will stand before God's judgment seat and give an account for our lives. The judgment of believers will be for rewards in God's kingdom. The judgment of those who rejected God and did not believe will be a judgment of damnation of their souls into an eternal lake of fire. I urge you today to believe the gospel and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be saved.

Hebrews 11:4

Abel was the first man of faith remembered in this chapter. This chapter lists all of the heroes of faith in the Bible. Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve. His older brother was Cain. Cain killed his brother Abel. Why?

This scripture pointed back to the story of Cain and Abel found in Genesis chapter 4. What did the Holy Spirit think was the most important event to remember in the life of Cain and Abel? This event demonstrated how these two men related to God through worship.

Abel worshiped God according to faith. Faith opened his spiritual eyes to see the correct order in which man can approach God and have a relationship with God.

Because man is a fallen sinner the only way we can come to God is by acknowledging our condition and seeking reconciliation on the basis of the only way man can draw near to God.

The Bible teaches that in order for our sins to be removed there must a blood sacrifice. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ came and died for us on the cross at Calvary. He shed his own blood as a substitute for us. He died so we would not have to die and be separated from God.

By faith Abel saw this truth. Perhaps his parents taught him, and when he heard the gospel he believed. In his heart he recognized the truth when he heard it and believed the gospel taught to him. Perhaps God showed Abel by a revelation the truth of the gospel.

Abel's sacrifice proved he was righteous. The sacrifice did not make him righteous. It was a work which demonstrated he had saving faith in the gospel which God revealed to him.

Not so with Cain. Cain came to God on Cain's terms. He did not accept God's method of reconciliation and went about to establish his own righteousness before God. Cain was the beginning of all false, man-made religion that exists in the world today. It is an attempt to worship God in a rebellious, willful manner that has no regard for what God said in his word.

Cain and Abel are important in the Bible because they show us two men who lived in the same house but were completely different. One man was of the spirit. One man was of the flesh. One man humbled himself before God. One man exalted himself and worshiped himself.

When man rejects the blood sacrifice God provided he resorts to shedding the blood of another sacrifice. Men do this through words, actions, and attitudes. The brother of the flesh always seeks to kill the brother of the spirit. Those who reject the blood of Jesus Christ eventually shed the blood of someone else.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day.

Hebrews 11:5

The brief history we have in the Bible of Enoch is recorded in **Genesis 5:18-24**. Verse 24, *"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."*

This is what **Hebrews 11:5** points back to when it said that Enoch was "translated that he should not see death". This meant that God raptured Enoch and took him to heaven. The only other person we know of like this in the Bible whom God raptured or translated in a similar manner was Elijah who was caught up by a chariot from heaven.

The description of a rapture is not isolated to the New Testament. This is a biblical precedent for the doctrine of the rapture going all the way back to Genesis chapter 5. God's ability to translate someone should not be difficult to believe, since it is right here in the beginning of the Bible and there are other examples of this same thing.

There is also another example in the book of Acts when God raptured someone. In Acts chapter 9 Philip was transported supernaturally from one place to another by the Lord.

Acts 8:39, *"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing".*

Raptures, a catching away, or you can call it "translation" are throughout the Bible.

There will be another rapture which the Bible talks about. It will involve all of those in the past and present who have believed on the Lord Jesus and are saved. Read **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**. This is what Christians are looking forward to. If you set your mind on things above then you expect the Lord to rapture you up to be with him in the air. This is what we are looking forward to. This is the hope of the born again, Spirit filled Christian today.

Hebrews 11:6

This is one of those verses you want to memorize. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Why? Because our entire relationship with the Lord is based on faith in his word. If you do not have faith then how can you have a relationship with God? It is impossible for God to have a relationship with you or you to have a relationship with him without faith.

Someone once told me they believed in God but could not believe or understand the Bible. This person had a God of their own understanding. Their God was something they made up in their imagination. The only people who cannot understand the Bible are those who are not willing to stand under it. Intellectual pride makes a person unable to comprehend the Bible because it is a spiritual book. The only person who can understand the Bible is the one who is willing to humble himself and obey what is

in the Bible. Humility comes before understanding. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Notice the promise given in this verse. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. If we will put aside our own will and set our heart to seek the Lord then we can find him. He is not far off somewhere. He is right here waiting for us to set our hearts on seeking him. Those who seek the Lord with all of their heart will find him.

This is a challenge because the world is filled with a million things to distract us from seeking the Lord. It takes a conscious decision on our part to simplify our lives so we have the time and energy to seek the Lord. I have found the best time for me to pray and seek the Lord is first thing in the morning after a cup of coffee and I've woke up. I will read a Bible passage and then pray and seek the Lord.

There is also a time to have a special season of intense seeking after the Lord. Whenever we come to a crossroads in life and we need to hear from the Lord, or we do not know how to go forward in life, it is time to seek the Lord with special intensity and focus. I've found that fasting during this time helps. Fasting can be from food, or also from entertainment. Changing your normal routine to set aside quiet time with the Lord is needed during these fork in the road moments in life.

Remember the promise of God. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Have faith in God. He is here. He hears. He will respond to our cry. Read **1 John 5:14-15**.

Hebrews 11:7

Noah is first mentioned in Genesis chapter 5. His story and the account of the flood continues through Genesis chapter 10. Noah is also mentioned in several places throughout the entire Bible in **1 Chronicles 1:4, Isaiah 54:9, Ezekiel 14:14, 1 Peter 3:20, and 2 Peter 2:5**. The Lord also talks about Noah in **Matthew 24:37-38** and **Luke 17:26-27**. The Lord Jesus spoke of Noah as a historical man who literally lived and that the flood literally happened. If we dismiss the account of Noah and the flood then we have to discount 1 Chronicles, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, and the Lord Jesus, not to mention Matthew and Luke who recorded the words of the Lord Jesus. In other words, the account of Noah is woven so tightly throughout the Bible it is impossible to remove this from scripture without completely tearing apart the Bible.

Noah heard the voice of God. The Lord warned Noah that a flood was coming that would destroy everything on the face of the earth with water. Noah believed God's word which he heard and followed God's instructions to build an ark which would preserve himself, his family, and a sampling of all the animals on the planet. How this happened can only be explained as a miracle. God had to be the one who brought all of those animals to Noah.

It is interesting that by Noah's obedience to God in building the ark he condemned the world. When we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ those who hear and believe are saved. At the same time those who hear and reject the gospel are damned. This is the double edged sword of God's word. We see this through the entire Bible. Those who hear, believe, and receive are saved. Those who hear and do not believe fall under the wrath of God.

Noah's flood is also a type of water baptism. It is similar to how God brought Israel through the Red Sea. Noah was saved through the water. Israel was saved through the water. What both types show is

the believer's salvation from the world system. The believer is resurrected on the other side of what destroys those who are in the world system. In the same way this gives us further insight into what happened when God placed us in Christ Jesus. We were crucified with Christ, we died with him on the cross, we were buried with him, and then we rose again with him on the third day. Scripture teaches that this is the truth. As we continue to believe the gospel it will exert greater power over us and save us from ourselves, from sin, from the world system, and from the devil.

Righteousness is by faith. This was true of Noah and is true of us today. Men were always saved in this manner. We hear God's word, we believe God's word, and we receive God's word. We agree with God. God is right and I am wrong. I agree with the Lord on everything. The more we grow in agreement the Lord Jesus the more we are set free from ourselves, from sin, from this world system, and from the enemy. May the word of God dwell in our hearts richly!

Hebrews 11:8-10

The account of Abraham began in Genesis 11 and occupied the majority of the rest of the book of Genesis, including the account of his sons and the promise God gave Abraham.

When Abraham heard the voice of the Lord he believed. He believed the voice of the Lord when God spoke to him. He heard God's word, he believed God's word, and he received it into his heart. He made decisions in life based on hearing God's word and believing God's word which he heard.

God called Abraham and promised to give him and his family an inheritance. This inheritance included Canaan. Abraham journeyed in Canaan like a stranger, living in tents, and moving around. Notice, however, the summary: he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This was a spiritual revelation from God about the city of God that was not made by men but made by God. I believe this is the same city John saw in Revelation and went into detail describing. John gave exact measurements and the type of materials the city was made from. How did Abraham know to look for this city?

God revealed it to him. The Holy Spirit shows us things to come. Jesus said the Holy Spirit shows us things to come. He reveals it to us by the Holy Spirit. Abraham not only believed in the promise about the land inheritance, but he saw beyond this to the city of God. His true destination was that city. He lived in the promised land as a stranger, a pilgrim, as someone who was passing through.

This is how we live today. Our lives are temporary. We live in the temporary tent of this body, which we will put off, and enter real life in the city of God. Believe the gospel and be saved so that you can see this city one day. Read **1 John 5:12**.

Hebrews 11:11-12

Hebrews 11:11-12, *"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."*

God promised Abraham and Sara they would have a son. This promise took a long time to fulfill. From my reckoning maybe 25 years between the time God told them and when it finally happened. A year

before Sara had Isaac God came to them again and repeated his promise to them. By this time they were so old that Sara could not physically have children, but she had a baby anyway. With God nothing is impossible. God created the heavens and the earth. He created man. God was more than able to give Sara the ability to bear children in her old age.

From this verse in Hebrews we get insight into Sara's life. She believed in God. When she heard the word from God she believed what he said. As a result of her faith, the number of her descendants were like the number of stars in the sky or the number of sands on the seashore.

Sara did not have anything except the word God. She was commended for believing in God's word. She heard him, believed, and received his word into her heart. God honored her faith and fulfilled his word to her. It was a miracle that she had this son Isaac.

God will fulfill his promises to us. It might take a while for the fulfillment of God's promises, but we are called to endure patiently. Patient endurance with joyfulness. This is what Christians are called to. We continue to hope and trust in the Lord, and endure with patience all trials. Don't forget God's promise. He will fulfill the word which he spoke to us. He will never leave us and he will never forsake us.

If any man come to the Lord Jesus he will not be turned away. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. This is God's promise in his word. The Lord will not fail to do what he said he would do. We must be patient and wait on him.

Hebrews 11:13-16

This list in Hebrews chapter 11 of people who believed God's word eventually died. They died in faith. They did not receive the promises during their earthly life but they saw the promises of God far off and embraced them and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.

Stop a minute and think about this mental framework of thinking. What does this mean?

It means they did not live focused on the temporary life here. This attitude is in stark contrast to American churches who are focused on here and now and how to live a better or successful life here and now.

The people in this list in Hebrews had their mind set on heaven and the world coming after this one. They lived on earth looking for the life above this life. Some may say they were so heavenly minded they were no earthly good but that is a lie. It is only those whose mind is fixed on heaven who are really any good on earth. Everyone else whose mind is fixed on this temporary life are selfish and worship self.

How do you live as a stranger and pilgrim? You remember every day that this world is not your home. The world system is opposed to God's kingdom. Everything in the world system is a counterfeit of God's kingdom. Government, business, and society world structures take care of man's fleshly needs but kill the spirit in man.

It is only those living for heaven that God says he is not ashamed of. People who confess they believe in God but live like there is no other life than this one do not bring glory to God. It does not bring glory

to God to live a self-centered life. It does not bring glory to God to be self-absorbed in your own provision and protection. When people live like this they are their own portion. But for those who live for God's kingdom the Lord is their portion.

We can only love the city of God if the Lord reveals it to us. God revealed this city to those who looked forward to it. God revealed it to us in scripture. Read about this city of God in the book of Revelation. The apostle John saw this city.

Read about it and ask the Lord to make that city real to you. Desire the better country that is before us. Do not live for the temporary life but instead store up your treasure in heaven. Where your treasure is your heart will be also. If you focus on getting treasure on earth then that is where your heart will be. Instead, invest your life in what will count in eternity.

Hebrews 11:17-22

These verses contain the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. This covers most of the book of Genesis in scope.

Notice the faith of Abraham is demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice what he loved most, his son, Isaac. God gave Isaac to Abraham. Abraham reasoned if God asked him to sacrifice Isaac then God would raise Isaac from the dead. God promised Abraham's descendants would come through Isaac. See how a man can take God's word, and using reason and logic, come to conclusions which move him to action. More importantly, we understand that this is a clear picture of God the Father sacrificing his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was God showing what he would do in the future. I believe Abraham understood exactly what these things meant because in the New Testament Jesus said Abraham saw his day and rejoiced.

The testimony of faith is tied to men blessing their descendants. In their blessing there was a finger pointing to the future fulfillment of God's promises. All their faith rested on the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have no record of God speaking to Joseph, except through his dreams, but we see he believed the word which God spoke to his fathers. Joseph's instructions regarding his bones showed he believed the promise God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Today our faith must rest on God's word. We should not create an imaginary god to put our faith in. We should not put faith in faith. We should not put faith in ourselves. We should instead put our faith in God's word. God's word and his promise is all found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the sum of God's word and all his promises to us. Have faith in God. Have faith in what God said. Have faith in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Hebrews 11:23-26

Notice the pattern of people with faith. Their faith saw something in the future. Moses had "respect unto the recompense of the reward". This is similar to Abraham who saw a city with foundations whose builder was God. Both of their faith was on something in the future. Their faith was in an invisible kingdom to appear in the future. Moses was willing to suffer affliction in this life because he was living for something in the future. How strange this faith is to the modern American gospel.

Moses turned his back on everything the world offered him. He had opportunity to be at the top of the world system pyramid but instead made a choice to be with those who lived outside the world system. You could not get more outside the world system than the Hebrew slaves. They were in a position completely outside the world system. This was according to God's will. God will put everyone outside the world system that he chooses as his own. Moses learned to live outside the world system by faith. He suffered because of his faith. He suffered affliction with the people of God.

The people of God suffer in the world system. They always suffer. As Paul wrote: "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

The pleasure of sin is for a short season. The pleasure of sin is temporary and does not last. It is fading away. This reminds me of another verse which confirms this truth for us. Read **1 John 2:15-17**.

Those who have Biblical faith will shun the world system. They will turn away from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Instead, they will turn by faith to Jesus and turn to God in repentance. They will deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow Jesus.

Hebrews 11:27-29

Moses left the world system because he had faith in the God he could not see. He could not see God but he could hear God's voice speaking to him. Moses did not fear the Pharaoh, king of Egypt, but instead he had respect and fear of God who spoke to him.

When God revealed to Moses how he would bring Israel out of Egypt Moses may not have understood God's method but he obeyed. This is the pattern in the Bible. God speaks to a man and the man obeys even if he does not understand what God is doing. He does what God says and the Lord will do the impossible. God brought Israel out of Egypt. How did he do this? He had Israel celebrate the pass over which included the sprinkling of a lamb's blood over the door of each Hebrew household.

As the account of Moses and Israel continued they came to the Red Sea. This is another picture of salvation from the world. We came out of the world but we also have to die to the world. Israel going through the Red Sea was a picture of death and resurrection. Israel was raised to a new life through what brought death to Pharaoh's army. This is the same picture we see with Noah's flood. The same thing that brought salvation to Noah and his family destroyed the world.

These pictures of death and resurrection and of salvation through what destroys the world was a prophecy of the gospel. It portrayed the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God himself placed us into Christ Jesus. We died with him on the cross, we were buried in him, and we were raised together with him to walk in a new life. God says to forget the past and to look toward the new life that we have in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Hebrews 11:30-31

The walls of Jericho falling down was recorded in Joshua chapter 6. The falling of the walls of Jericho was a miracle from God. As much as it was a miracle that God parted the Red Sea for Israel to travel across so also was the falling of the walls of Jericho. In this battle Israel believed in the word of God

and did as they were told. Their part was to believe God's word and walk around the city of Jericho. God did the rest.

We see this pattern through the Bible. God puts his children into impossible situations and asks them to believe his word. When we believe God's word then we see God do a miracle. The Lord knocks down the walls of Jericho. Our part is to believe.

This can be applied to our personal life. We will find ourselves in situations that are over our head. Life can become too difficult to manage. During these times we should simply rest in God's word, trust in the Lord with all of our heart, and see what the Lord will do.

Does this faith imply a passive life? Do we just sit back and do nothing? In the case of the walls of Jericho God had them do something. He had them marching around the city, making music, and praising the Lord.

There may be something God has for us to do and from what I see in the Bible many times what God tells us to do may not make sense to the world. We simply believe God, however, and do what he says to do. We leave the results up to God.

But, what if God does not deliver us? Then we say with Job, "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." No matter what happens our part is to believe and give glory to God by trusting in him. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again on the third day.

Hebrews 11:32-35

Throughout Hebrews the apostle used examples and principles from the Old Testament to prove his point. Here he continued to show us that believers in the Old Testament were saved and pleased God in the same way we do today. We please God by having faith.

In this list we see believers obtained victory in various situations. They won whatever battle they were in. We have the example of the woman whose son was raised from the dead by Elisha. These people were examples of faith and they were commended for their faith. The result of their faith was great victory and deliverance.

However, as we see, those who did not obtain victory were also commended for their faith. Some of them did not accept temporary victory, but instead looked forward to the ultimate victory in God's kingdom. This is a faith which went beyond temporary victory in the here and now. It was a faith that was not moved by circumstances in this temporary life. It is a faith rooted and grounded in the kingdom. It is grounded and set on the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a faith that is a true anchor for the soul.

We see then that faith cannot be judged by outward circumstances. Some who appear to be poor in this world are actually rich in faith. There are people who appear to be rich in this world but who are poor in their faith. The Lord Jesus addressed this in **Revelation 3:14-19**.

Hebrews 11:36-40

This is the second group. The first group obtained deliverance and victory. This second group suffered and were persecuted and died for their faith. They did not have success in this world, but were commended just as those who did obtain success. Again, this teaches us that faith cannot be evaluated based on outward circumstances of the believer. Faith is not evaluated based on success in the world. Faith is not about success or failure. It is not about prosperity, health, or wealth. Instead, faith is the ability to see God's kingdom. Faith is how to be reconciled properly to God and receive inheritance in God's kingdom.

The end of these verses stand out to me: "... *that they without us should not be made perfect...*" To me this sounds like the entire body of believers cannot receive full reward until all believers are gathered together. I think this points forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. There is something in front of us, both for those who already died in faith, and those who are alive and remain. What do we have in front of us yet?

Here are some of the things in front of us: the rapture of the church, the second coming of Christ, the judgment seat of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb, the millennial reign of Christ, and the New Jerusalem. These are events described in the Bible and are still in the future for us. These are the events we should look forward to. We should not be living only for this temporary existence in the here and now. Instead, we should look forward to all the Lord has planned for us. We should look forward with hope to all God has prepared for those who believe in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4; Romans 14:10; Revelation 19:9; Revelation 20:6; Revelation 3:12; 21:2

Hebrews Chapter 12

Hebrews 12:1-2

The cloud of witnesses was a list of those commended for their faith in the previous chapter. They are called witnesses but I think "witnesses" is not about them watching from heaven but that we remember their testimony of faith. Their witness, or testimony, can inspire us to follow their example. We should follow in the footsteps of this cloud of witnesses. How can we follow their testimony? The apostle gave practical instructions on how we can run the Christian race and finish well.

The first thing we can do is lay aside every weight. It is left up to us to apply this to our personal lives. What weight is slowing us down or hindering us from following the example of faith? What do we have in our lives that hinders our faith in the Lord Jesus? What is stopping us from being productive and fruitful in our testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ? We can examine our heart with the help of the Holy Spirit and no doubt the Lord will show us what is weighing us down. Notice there is a distinction between "every weight" on one hand, and then also "the sin which so easily besets us" on the other hand. This tells me that what is a spiritual "weight" may not necessarily be an obvious sin. Sometimes there are things which are not sin in itself but it still hinders our spiritual walk.

There are some sins which easily beset us. As a result of tolerating spiritual weight we become vulnerable to sin which easily besets us. These are things which trip us up and they should not. They

are sins which easily beset us. These sins do not have a hard time finding us. They easily overtake us. In my experience these are the sins we grew up with, whether it be anger, or covetousness, or pride, or something else. The things which we grew up with are the hardest to overcome, and sometimes difficult to even identify. We are accustomed to these sins and easily commit these sins without thinking about it.

However, we have a great cloud of witnesses before us who overcome the spiritual weights and the sin which so easily beset them. We are called to be overcomers. We are not called to be lukewarm. Instead, we are to be fervent in our walk with the Lord. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify weights and sins which easily beset you. Lay these things aside. This is the only way we can run this race successfully.

Another part of running this race is keeping our eyes on Jesus. Sin will always direct your gaze inward toward yourself. It will keep you focused on yourself, whether in fear, or anxiety, or doubt, or unbelief. But when we turn away from ourselves and look at Jesus we receive power from heaven to overcome. In order to run this race with patience we must continue to look at Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

The fact that Jesus is the author and the finisher of my faith gives me a lot of encouragement and comfort. It is God who inspired faith in my heart. He was the one who opened my ears so that I could hear his voice. He was the one who opened my spiritual eyes so that I could see his kingdom. The same Lord Jesus who gave me faith to start with will continue to supply me day by day with the grace I need to walk with him and one day arrive at the desired haven of rest.

How did Jesus endure? He saw the joy in front of him and so overcame the cross. This shows us that one of the greatest weapons in overcoming is found in joy. No wonder the apostle Paul told us to "*Rejoice evermore*", and to "*rejoice in the Lord always*". **1 Thessalonians 5:16, Philippians 4:4.**

The Lord Jesus overcame and sat down at the right hand of God. We are called to be overcomers and sit down with the Lord Jesus. In order to do this we must be diligent to remove anything that hinders the Holy Spirit. Pray and ask God to give you a willing spirit and heart to obey him in everything he says.

Hebrews 12:3-8

We are encouraged to consider what the Lord Jesus endured on our behalf. In this context, the purpose of considering the Lord Jesus is to help us have the correct perspective during trials. We can assume when we go through trials that we are being corrected. Many times I do not know what I am being corrected for, but we can rest assured that God sees what he is doing. We don't have to always understand everything, but we can make a decision to trust in God's word. It is encouraging to me to realize that suffering has a purpose. That purpose is to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Considering the Lord encourages us to have a bigger perspective on circumstances.

Weariness comes from a lack of perspective. If we can understand the purpose of our circumstances it will help us endure. When people lack the knowledge of "why" they often become weary in their minds. Here we have one reason why we suffer. It is for our correction. Correction is needed so that we may be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't this the goal of the Christian life? Why do you call yourself a Christian? Don't you want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ? Correction will help us attain the goal of becoming like the Lord Jesus.

People who hate correction do not see the value in it. They do not see the value in it because they have no higher goal in life than their own personal comfort or pleasure. Anyone whose goal is comfort and pleasure will never succeed as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If a man wants to be a great craftsman he will need to put in the dirt time. He has to get his hands dirty with his hammer, or saw, or whatever tool he uses in his trade. In the spiritual life, God uses difficult circumstances to hone our spiritual skills. We learn to be loving, and patient, and kind, and humble, and forgiving. These qualities are not natural to men. They must be learned from the Holy Spirit in the school of suffering and hardship.

Do not despise the work of God in your life. It is easy to become discouraged, it is easy to despise the work of God in your life. If we are to benefit from God's work in us we must cooperate and that means having a good attitude. It means to have an attitude of faith that God is at work and that we can trust him. God loves us and he is treating us like a son. Natural fathers train their sons through discipline. How much more does God the Father train us as sons through correction and discipline?

God loves us and will carry on to completion the good work he started in us. The Lord Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. He who began this good work in us will be faithful to perform it.

Hebrews 12:9-11

The apostle draws on the common experience of parental discipline to demonstrate our relationship with God and how he deals with us. An earthly father will correct and discipline his son for his own good. However, God corrects us, not only for our good, but also so that we can participate in his nature. How is this possible? Somehow, when the Lord corrects us he also imparts into us something of his own nature so that we can change, and grow, and become more like him.

I have experienced this in my life especially when I was a young Christian. The Lord would correct me, sometimes severely, but it did not discourage or dishearten me. Instead, I would be glad because it would open my eyes to something else about God. I would see something new in my spirit about the Lord. It was worth going through suffering in order to know God better.

This is an idea that is foreign to an unbeliever. Someone who does not have a relationship with God cannot fathom how correction can change us and conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's chastening is not joyful when it happens but afterward it produces a change in us and the more we experience this the more we look forward to the result of our suffering. No one likes to be corrected. No one likes to suffer. But there is good that comes from it when God performs this work in your life. It can cause a man to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness. This is a life which bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22.**

To grow spiritually we need to hold onto truth. There will be times if this is not understood the Christian will be in danger of discouragement. Discouragement is a dangerous place for the believer because it attracts the power of darkness. Instead, we need to always maintain an attitude of thankfulness, praise, worship, and faith in God. There will be situations in life that are inexplicable and beyond explanation. It is in those times we must look up and trust that God is at work in us. He has a good plan for our life. He will get us to the desired haven and we must trust in him. Do not give in to

unbelief but be strong in faith and give glory to God. Like Job said, *"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"*.

Hebrews 12:12-17

When I read this it feels like a continuation of the conversation about God's correction. What happens if we accept God's correction and rejoice at God's work in our lives? Then our hands no longer hang down. Our knees receive strength. Our feet are enabled to walk in a straight path and we are no longer lame like the man who does not know the Lord. We are healed. We are able to have peace with men and be holy.

But what happens when we reject God's correction? We fail and miss the grace of God. Bitterness comes in like it did with Esau and the result is a profane life. A man who rejects correction sets his mind on his own pleasure and provision like Esau. If we persist in rejecting God's correction then we become incapable of repenting and turning away from the things which destroy us.

Receiving correction is a basic Christian principle. I learned this in the first few weeks I became a Christian. I was taught this by memorizing **Hebrews 13:17**, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."* This means to accept correction from leaders. If we cannot receive correction from men how can we receive correction from God? This is tied together. God uses men to correct, teach, and train us. We need to be willing to humble ourselves and be corrected. I have failed in this area many, many times. I always suffer when I fail at this and you would think I would learn my lesson but I've discovered that human nature is intractable.

God loves us and will be faithful to deal with this human nature. He will find ways to humble us for our good. This process never ends. It is as true for me today as it was when I first learned **Hebrews 13:17**. God's discipline never ends until he is completed with us.

Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be made whole? Then let God have his way in your life. Agree with God that he is right and that you are wrong. Humble yourself under God's correction and discipline. **Read James 1:2-4, James 5:11.**

Hebrews 12:18-21

There is a stark contrast between the Christian believer and the Hebrews who gathered around Moses at the mount of God. This contrast promotes the idea that God in the Old Testament was a different God than God in the New Testament. He is not a different God, but he does reveal himself to mankind in a progressive fashion.

We see this progression in relationships. I've never had a job where I started out in a friendly relationship with my employer. There is usually one type of relationship with an employer when you start a job. However, the longer you stay with that job you may find the relationship progresses. You get to know the boss better and sometimes it is possible to become friends with that person.

What Israel saw of God on that mountain was how he wanted to reveal himself to them. He wanted to instill the fear of God. He wanted to bring an entire nation into one heart and mind. He wanted to unite them in a profound fear of God.

We are no longer at that mountain. In the New Testament God did not reveal himself with fire and blackness and darkness and tempest. He revealed himself as a man who was born in a stable, lived a humble life, showed patience, kindness, love, mercy, and ultimately sacrificed himself as an atonement for our sins on the cross.

The Lord continues to teach us about himself. Hebrews exhorts the Hebrew Christians to not cling to the religion of the temple and the Jews. Instead, go forward to know God in the way he was revealing himself through his Son Jesus Christ.

This is a good lesson for us to apply to our lives. I think the apostle Paul summarized this very well. Read **Philippians 3:13-14**.

Hebrews 12:22-24

Under Moses Israel had an earthly tabernacle. Peter tried to build an earthly tabernacle for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This is all he knew. But the Lord was doing a new thing so God told Peter to listen to what the Lord Jesus said. Listen to God's Son! The Son of God is pointing us to the heavenly Jerusalem. He is pointing us to something higher than any earthbound religion, spiritual shadow, or type. He is inviting us to participate in a relationship with the living God!

In **Revelation 21** John spoke of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. This is where we are heading as children of God. We are heading toward this heavenly new Jerusalem.

Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. The old covenant under Moses was fulfilled through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Now we are in the new covenant, which is a covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ. Now it is not about what we can do for God but it is about what God has done for us. He gave his Son for us. Our work now is to believe in the Son of God whom the Father sent into the world. Hear him!

God is still speaking today. He wants us to listen to his voice and hear him. He is speaking. He is speaking words to edify, and exhort, and comfort us. Listen to the Lord. His voice is the most important voice you will ever hear. Read **John 10:4**.

Hebrews 12:25-27

The Lord speaks to us in heaven and expects us to listen to him, remember what he says, and receive what he says into our heart. God's word is meant to change us and transform us. God's word comes to cleanse, to make us whole, and to heal us. It saves us, and forgives us, and gives us eternal life.

Notice how careful the Lord instructs Moses to teach Israel not to make any kind of visible image or symbol of God to worship. The true God is invisible to the eye of fallen mankind. The true God can only be known by hearing and listening to his voice. When men looked at the plain carpenter from Nazareth they did not see God. But when they listened to his voice and the words he spoke, then they heard God speaking. Never man spoke like this man!

When God visited Adam and Eve the Bible says that the voice of the Lord walked with them in the garden. The voice of the Lord! How many times did the prophets say that the people did not obey the voice of the Lord their God?

Jesus said his sheep hear his voice. God is speaking. Those who belong to the Lord hear his voice. Do not refuse him! Do not reject the word of God today. The Lord is speaking to you today.

The word which we stand on is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures.

The Lord speaks continually to each believer. As we hear him then we accept what he says and we humble ourselves. Many times the word the Lord speaks will correct something in your life. Receive God's word. Say to the Lord, "You are right, Lord! I am wrong." Acknowledge that God's word is true and renounce all your own opinions and feelings. Embrace the word of God and humble yourself under God's word.

God will speak one day and everything in creation will be unmade except that which is eternal. On that day only the souls of redeemed mankind will live and everything else will melt away. God will make a new heavens and a new earth where we will live with the Lord forever.

Hebrews 12:28-29

The Lord is a consuming fire. The truth should give us pause. Shouldn't we learn the fear of God from a verse like this? Shouldn't this at least give us a minute to stop and think about what this means? God is a consuming fire.

We see this on the mountain when God gave commandments to Moses. He was a fire on that mountain. He also revealed himself to Moses in a burning bush. He was a fire that burned but did not consume the bush.

The Lord is a refining fire. He is a fire that brings judgment to destroy the wicked, but a fire which removes the sin from the believer. His fire burns away all that is of sin, self, the world, and the devil. Our God is a consuming fire.

Those who trust in the Lord Jesus and believe the gospel of his death, burial, and resurrection receive a kingdom which cannot be removed. The fire of God's judgment will remove everything and will in that place establish a kingdom which cannot be moved or consumed. The eternal kingdom of God is coming. It cannot be held back. All the kingdoms of this world will pass away but the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ will endure forever.

We should serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Serving God is not a joke or a sermon to make you laugh. Serving God is not entertainment to make you feel good. It is our duty. We should serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. God is a consuming fire. Read **1 Peter 1:7**. God's fire removes everything that will hinder us from being ready for the rapture. May the Lord complete the work of his fire in our lives so that our soul and spirit will be filled with the Holy Ghost and looking steadfastly for the return of the Lord Jesus. May God send revival again and that all of the dross and compromise and hypocrisy and backsliding in our lives will be consumed in God's fire. Our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews Chapter 13

Hebrews 13:1-4

The reality of angels is acknowledged in these verses. This was put in the context of hospitality, which brought to my mind the account of Lot when he showed hospitality to the angels who brought God's wrath on Sodom. It also reminded me of the angelic visitations to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses and Joshua. Throughout the Bible there are accounts of the activity of these agents of the Lord. It is no use denying the reality that God sends angels to do his work on the earth. It is possible to come into contact with an angel and not be aware of it. It is possible at some point in your life you might have an encounter with an angel and not even know it.

The apostle encouraged the church to remember those who were in bonds. This meant to remember those who were in prison. I once thought this meant we should have a prison ministry. There is nothing wrong with a prison ministry. I think in the context of Hebrews this was speaking more specifically of Christians who were in prison or suffering for faith in Jesus. We should remember brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who suffer for their faith in the Lord Jesus. Pray that their faith will be strong and that God will supply their needs, protect them, and be their portion. I've made this a habit in my everyday prayers to remember the persecuted church.

Marriage was mentioned and God's wrath on those who do not honor marriage. Our society is filled with people who have no respect for marriage, but instead just live together, have children, and then maybe get married as an afterthought. Most of the younger generation have no clue how far away from the Bible they live and were never taught any different. Ignorance does not mean the Lord will not deal with these sins. The Lord will deal with our disobedience to his word.

May the Lord help us show hospitality, remember those who are suffering, and honor marriage. What do these verses have in common? These are basic building blocks of family and society. We should follow the pattern the Lord gave us in his word. When everyone understands the Bible and puts it into practice we will have peace. Without God's word people live in spiritual darkness and do not understand why their life is so difficult.

Hebrews 13:5-8

The word "conversation" in the King James Bible means "lifestyle". Our lifestyle should not typify covetousness. Does your appearance, home, or transportation reflect an attitude that you love the things of the world? Do you like to have something better than your neighbor? You are covetous. We are instructed to rid our life of a covetous attitude. Instead, we should train ourselves to be content with what we have. Why? Because the Lord is our provider. He will take care of us and provide for us. He is our provider, and protector, and our portion forever.

Since the Lord is our provider and our protector we should never fear what men will do to us. Men inevitably will seek to hurt you or do you in. They do this in order to step on you to elevate and lift themselves up. This is why people are competitive, envious and strive against others. We should never be afraid of what men will do because the Lord said he will never leave or forsake us. The Lord is our helper.

Remember the testimony of those who went before in the faith. Read the testimonies and biographies of Christians, missionaries, and those who gave their life for the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. Allow their testimony to inspire you and realize they invested their life in the only thing which will count in eternity. The only thing that will matter is the gospel and the souls of men.

The Lord does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We count on the testimony in scripture about God. He will always act in accordance with the revelation in the Bible of who he is. This can comfort, encourage, and also produce the fear of God in us.

Hebrews 13:9-13

As we have seen throughout Hebrews we have a contrast between the old Hebrew religious system and then the new way of life in Christ Jesus. The encouragement is not to be carried about with different kinds of strange doctrines. Why do we have different kinds of strange doctrines?

One reason is because the devil spreads doctrines in the church to lead people astray. One of the biggest false doctrines I have seen in my life is the doctrine of health, wealth, and prosperity. It is known as the prosperity gospel. People in this false doctrine talk a lot about "faith" but their definition of faith is not rooted and grounded in the Bible. Their idea of faith comes from superstition and the occult. I call those who promote this false faith doctrine in the church "christian witchcraft" because the principles are the same was witch craft but clothed in Christian terminology. It is truly a wolf in sheep's clothing. Name it; claim it. Positive confession. Positive mental attitude. The roots of this is paganism and witchcraft.

You do not see this in the Bible unless you twist scriptures. The Lord Jesus had no place to lay his head. The apostle Paul did most of his ministry from a prison cell or as a slave on a boat that was shipwrecked. We have an entire book in the Bible about a prophet whose entire message was that suffering is allowed by God for a purpose (Job). I understand why people embrace false doctrines so quickly. They come to church and the Bible because they want a better life, or success, or they wanted to be provided for. But people are easily sidetracked into becoming covetous and self-worshippers. Today self worship is actively promoted by mega churches and many popular preachers in America. It is satanic and goes a long way to explain the condition our nation is now in as a result.

We are not to participate in this fake Christianity. Instead, we are to join the Lord Jesus outside this evil religious system. We join him outside the building and accept the fact we will be misunderstood, slandered, attacked, persecuted, and perhaps might face becoming a martyr for the gospel. May the Lord give us the courage to be strong in faith and to endure patiently and with joyfulness.

Hebrews 13:14-16

Here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come. Think about this. What is this teaching us? It is teaching us not to live for the current life. The current life we have now on earth in these clay vessels does not take priority. Instead, another life that is in the future, a life in a new city with a new kingdom is the focus. What do people teach today, though? Just the opposite. Christian preachers in America today focus on the present, on improving self in this current life. They do not preach about the kingdom of God that is coming. They do not preach about the New Jerusalem that is coming. Their entire focus is on helping people live for this current life of pleasure, experience, and provision. This is not the focus of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ or the apostles. The teaching in the New Testament is

about a view of a kingdom which is coming in the future. It is about living for that kingdom rather than for this current world system. This current world system focuses on provision, money, taking care of your flesh, protecting yourself. It revolves around the self life. The kingdom of God, however, revolves around the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can live for this kingdom right now. As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus Christ commands his followers to start right now living for the kingdom of God rather than for self and the world system.

Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

If you are risen with Christ then you should seek the kingdom of God. What does this tell you about the religious people who promote self-improvement? **Colossians 3:1**, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."*

Hebrews 13:17-19

This verse was one I learned when I was a new Christian. I was given this verse to memorize so that I would understand my duty to obey my leaders. Obedience and submission to authority is an important subject in the Bible. Without obedience and submission we will never realize a life of purpose or victory in the Lord.

The Lord Jesus is the greatest example of obedience and submission. He obeyed the heavenly Father. He listened to what God told him to do and then he did it. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God exalted him to the highest place.

When we obey our leaders it makes their job easier. When we make their job easier then it is better for us. It will create difficulty for ourselves if we give our leaders a hard time.

This is a simple lesson but so hard to understand and apply in every day life situations. It is one of the first verses I learned, and it is something I still have not been able to master or apply to my life on a consistent basis.

Hebrews 13:20-25

These concluding verses reiterate the gospel: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. In the book of Hebrews we start with the Lord Jesus Christ, we read about him throughout this book, and now this book concludes with the blood of the everlasting covenant.

God loved us and sent his Son into this world to die on a cross in our place. He was buried. He rose again on the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).

Jesus is the great shepherd of the sheep. Everyone who belongs to him hears his voice and follows him. They will not follow religious systems but they will follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our leader. He is the great shepherd of our souls.

The work of salvation is a work God did for us, and he continues to work in us to complete this good work. He will carry on this good work until completion. (**Philippians 1:6**). He will make us well pleasing in his sight.

May the Lord use this commentary on Hebrews to edify, exhort, and comfort the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. To God be all the glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

The Epistle of James

James Introduction

James reminds me of Proverbs. Thoughts go from one to another quickly. In the first chapter he covered several principles of life. Like Proverbs it presents us with practical knowledge for daily living. He took it for granted he was speaking to believers.

The first item is patience during trials. There is a reason we rejoice during trials. God is at work in allowing hardship. He allows it for spiritual growth in the life of the believer. The goal is for us to become "*complete and entire, lacking nothing*". This is the way to get dressed in the full armor of God. This is the way our character is refined and we are made into a vessel of honor, fit for the master's use, and prepared to every good work.

James went down an entire list of virtues. It might be difficult on first reading to see how these virtues fit together, but by meditating on this scripture a tapestry of daily Christian life emerges. We see the boundary stones for the spiritual Christian life and what that should look like.

James was not teaching us how to become Christians or how to grow as a Christians. Instead, he taught us what a growing Christian looks like from the outside. Here we see a picture of the overcoming Christian in action.

We see joy, patience, wisdom, faith, endurance, and piety all within the first chapter. As we proceed the subject of speech is covered in a section dealing with taming the tongue. Paul also touched on speech in his letters. Our speech should be filled with grace and seasoned with salt. What we say is the direct result of what we stored up in our heart according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus.

Another theme running through James is the poor and the rich. The poor Christian is exalted but the rich is warned that his station of wealth will quickly fade away. He also has strong rebuke and warning for those who are rich. He warned them that God's judgment of fire will consume their riches.

The emphasis from beginning to end is on eternity which is completely opposite of what you hear coming from pulpits in America today. We have strayed far away from the doctrine of the apostles. I can only hope and pray for a revival of the basic truths of God's word in my lifetime.

James Chapter 1

James 1:1-4

I'm glad James began with a word about joy. At the heart of being a Christian is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. There is joy in the Lord which nothing in this world can give. There is no joy like the joy of knowing you will live forever with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This joy is not the happiness people derive from consuming what the world offers. It is not something which comes by stimulating the senses or indulging in the lust of the flesh. This is another joy, one which comes from deep down on the inside and permeates the heart, the mind, the will, and can also affect the body of a man as well. It is a deep well and the water is pure and clean.

We have a promise of eternal joy before us. Believers will one day no longer be burdened by the sorrows of this life. Read **Isaiah 51:11**. Until that day, however, we still stand on God's word, and enter God's rest by faith in Jesus Christ, and experience the joy of the Lord by faith. **Philippians 4:4**.

Don't allow the enemy to keep you down for long. Don't allow discouragement, depression, or disappointment to take hold on your soul or make your face change into a permanent frown.

Instead, choose today to believe in the Lord, to believe in God's promises, and to be strong in faith. **Romans 4:20**.

Choose this day to stand in faith, no matter what our emotions, or what the circumstances look like. Walk by faith no matter what the world tells us. Lift up the shield of faith against the fiery darts of unbelief, fear, and doubt.

Above all else guard your heart for this is the wellspring of life. Our lives flow from the faith in our hearts. Guard your heart and do not allow unbelief, doubt, and fear to take root.

Meditate on God's word and God's promises. Repent and turn to God with all your heart. Pray God will revive us again.

Joy does not come without suffering. Though weeping may remain through the night, joy comes in the morning. Joy comes as we endure with patience the situation God has marked out for us. As we endure and overcome by faith then when God changes the situation we will know we learned our lesson and were changed into the likeness of Christ through it. We must grasp the purpose God has for us in going through various trials. There is much comfort knowing there is meaning in trials.

James plainly tells us God's purpose in our trials: so we can be made whole.

The Bible says foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. When we are born into this world we are born wayward, bent, and broken. It takes our parent's disciplining us and also God's discipline throughout our lives to remove the foolishness from our hearts.

Beyond removing what is wrong God also puts something in us which reflects the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a reflection of God's glory in Christ Jesus.

Trials can speed up this process if we walk by faith during the wilderness experience. Otherwise, we prolong our wilderness experience if we grumble or complain like Israel did.

God wrote down these examples of Israel as a lesson to us so that we would not follow their example. Instead, we should give thanks in everything.

Why? Because thanks shows faith in God's goodness, his control in our lives, and our decision to believe everything in our lives is material for God to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Read **Romans 8:28-29**.

Read **Hebrews 5:8**. What we experience as suffering is a tool in God's hand to teach us obedience so we can be like Jesus. Is the goal of your life to be more like Jesus every day? If so, then make a decision to reject any thought of discouragement, depression, or giving up. Reject any thought of despair and instead rejoice. God is at work in our lives to make us like his Son Jesus.

Our need is not to escape trials but our need is to be changed by trials into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surrender to the Lord and simply believe his word. Let God take care of it. He will work it out for us.

God will not damage you. You will not be damaged by the process of change. While you are in the process of transformation you will suffer no permanent damage.

If you are marked by pain then learn to bear those scars with joy as Paul did. Paul used his scars as leverage to preach the gospel with authority.

James 1:5-8

It takes wisdom from God to see value in trials. It takes revelation from the Lord to appreciate the importance of walking by faith in testing. When we are in the wilderness we look up to the Lord by faith. We remember the word of God and his promises. This is why we walk in the wilderness and hunger.

Read **Deuteronomy 8:3**. God's word is more precious than happiness. Our will is brought into submission to God's word while we are in the wilderness. We learn obedience to God, just like Jesus, through suffering in the wilderness.

The wilderness experience eventually comes to an end. It comes to an end when you are ready to fight the giants. Don't pray for the wilderness to end until you are ready to face the battle against giants.

When we ask God for wisdom it is so we can appreciate each step we take in the wilderness and to truly extract each lesson we should learn there. There is nothing wrong in praying for the trial to be over but pray we learn all we should while in the furnace so we don't have to repeat the process again.

I've noticed I go through the same trials. Finally I realized it is better to suffer now and learn my lesson and let God lead me through it rather than take shortcuts.

Walking by faith means we cannot allow depression, discouragement, or unbelief to take hold. One way you can tell unbelief is taking hold is when you hear God's word and it bounces off. It doesn't make any difference. You don't feel encouraged by God's promises. When you are in this condition the best thing to do is humble yourself and repent of unbelief. Stay on your knees until God gives you victory over unbelief.

Pray for wisdom and don't pray with unbelief in your heart. **Hebrews 11:6**, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

What exactly is a double-minded man? This is a man who professes to be a Christian but lives contrary to the word of God. His life is controlled by fear and unbelief in everyday living. He has no courage to face the unknown. He always retraces his steps instead of going boldly into what God has for him out front.

I know this because I've been the man who was a coward. I pray God burned it all out of me and I will walk with my face like a flint towards the future God has for me, not looking back, forgetting those things which are behind me.

Pray for wisdom and ask with faith that God will show you what you need to know in order to learn your lesson. God is taking you somewhere, and it is up to you to believe he loves you and has a good plan for you. No matter how bad your present circumstances are the Lord has a good plan for you. Your best days are still in front of you.

James 1:9-11

In James we read about a completely different attitude toward the poor and the rich than what we see promoted in popular American churches. The attitude we see in James is the same attitude Jesus had. Jesus clearly stated the gospel was preached to the poor. He said it was difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

What can we conclude from these words? The same conclusion Paul came to in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**.

Do we see how God elevates the poor man? Why is it the poor man is elevated? Because the poor naturally have a quality which God is most attracted to: humility! A poor man is more apt to humility and more willing to humble his heart. A rich man will fade away because of the pride which goes with all of that money, position, and power. All of that worldly power is fading away as soon as he has it in his hands. It sprouts wings and flies away.

Let us not waste our lives chasing after money. Instead, let us determine to obey **Matthew 6:33**.

James 1:12

There is no escaping temptation while we are in this fallen world. Even the Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He overcame every temptation and did not sin. **Hebrews 4:15**.

We do not put ourselves near temptation or look for it. However, we are guaranteed sooner or later the enemy or our carnal nature will bring us into a temptation.

Sin is when we do what we want regardless of what God says. It is living for self first and not living for Christ. It is missing the mark and the mark is God's perfection. The law of God shows us the mark, and Jesus is the express image of God. When we compare ourselves to Jesus we will come up short. (**Romans 3:23**).

Here we read that God does not tempt man to commit sin but we are tempted when led away by our own lusts and enticed. When we are tempted God makes a way for us to escape and overcome if we look for escape. **1 Corinthians 10:13**.

In **James 1:12** we find the highest motivation one can possibly have for enduring any temptation. This motivation is our love for the Lord Jesus. Also, this scripture is a promise from God: we will receive a crown of life for enduring temptation.

With this in mind let us pray the Lord will give us a hatred of sin, a love for righteousness, and let our hearts be filled with an intense love for the Lord Jesus. It is this love which gives us the power to endure and overcome the temptation of the enemy.

James 1:13-16

When we get in trouble we usually want to blame others and point the finger at anyone except ourselves as the problem. We are terrible at taking personal responsibility for our actions. However, in my experience, the first step toward correcting a problem is to own it.

This scripture teaches us that it is not God's fault when we fall into sin, but it is our own personal responsibility. We have to admit that we are wrong, and that God is right. This is basic, and unless we are willing to humble ourselves and admit we are wrong we cannot proceed any further.

Notice this verse also shows us that there is a definite progression with temptation, lust, enticement, sin, and then death. The wages of sin is always death, no matter where we may be on this progressive spectrum and downward spiral.

The only way to escape this free fall of sin is to own up to our personal responsibility. Humility on our part enables God to intervene on our behalf with his grace. God gives grace to the humble, but he resists the proud. He delivers those who call upon his name in humility.

Let us pray we will have a love for the truth, even when the truth condemns us. Let us bow our knees before the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in the love of our heavenly Father to cleanse us, purify us, and make us whole.

James 1:17-18

Everything good in my life came from God. I did not create anything that is good in my life. It is human nature to think we create our own good luck or good fortune or that we build success in our lives by following the rules and being persistent. Following the rules is good but real success and good things come from God alone.

What does this tell us about the character of God? He does not change. There is no shadow of turning with God. Once you know who the Lord is you can be assured that he will not change tomorrow. When God says he loves you he does not change his mind. When God does something good in your life he never takes it back.

The greatest thing the Lord ever did in my life was opening the eyes of my heart so that I can truly see that the Lord Jesus is real and loves me and died on the cross in my place. The Lord Jesus died for me at Calvary, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. His Holy Spirit lives in me, and his presence goes with us. He will never leave us, and he will never forsake us.

Notice that it is God's word of truth that gives us new life. We were begotten. We were given new life through the resurrection power of the word of truth. There is a goal in God's work in giving us new life. It is so we can be a first fruits of his creation.

God's word gives us life. When people reject God's word they are in reality rejecting eternal life. Men prefer spiritual death. This shocks me to think about. We would prefer to figure out everything for ourselves instead of believing the truth in God's word. Pride, arrogance, unbelief, and rejection of the truth. This is human nature. But God's word gives us eternal life. When we believe the gospel then we are born again. We receive a new kind of life within us, it is the very life of God, the Holy Spirit. He makes us unto a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away, and all things become new.

The Lord is good. He is always good. He is good to all. His goodness will never change. He will always be a good God, who loves us, and gives us everything that is good for life and godliness.

James 1:19-21

There is a place for anger in the Christian life. It is a normal emotion which God created and which he feels. Jesus demonstrated his anger when he made a whip of cords and drove the money changers out of the temple. The Bible says that Jesus was angry at the hard hearts of the Pharisees. Paul comments on anger in **Ephesians 4:26**.

The wrath of man is self-centered and is based on injury or injustice done to the individual. In this case we are always commanded to forgive those who transgress us. We are to leave room for God to take care of those who sin against us. Read **Romans 12:19-21**.

In the epistle of James we have some tools for short circuiting wrath when it tries to rise up in our hearts. The first tool is to listen carefully. Don't just listen long enough to come up with a self-defense or argument. Listen carefully. Truly hear what the other person is saying. Put yourself in their shoes. Try very carefully to think through their position and what they are saying. This is easier said than done because human nature wants to jump to its own defense and fight. We must suppress the natural desire to defend ourselves or fight. Instead, we need to listen carefully and think, think, think.

Take time to think before you speak. Again, easier said than done. But it is very important we do not let words start flying out of our mouth that we will regret. We might win an argument with harsh words, but we will still lose if we lose that person who is attacking us. See, the goal of the Christian is not to vindicate ourselves, but to win others for Christ. We must choose our words carefully. Do not give in to the natural instinct to defend self or vindicate yourself. Leave room for God to take care of that. Sometimes the best thing to do is just to remain quiet and not say anything at all.

Finally, we need to always remember that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. We will not further the purpose of God by embracing wrath against anyone. Do not give in to the desire of the flesh to defend self or vent all of one's wrath against anyone. It is much better to keep a quiet spirit and speak to God alone about the grief we bear toward anyone.

May the Lord help us this day to listen carefully, be slow to speak, and slow to wrath.

James 1:22-25

What does it mean to be a doer of the word and not a hearer only? The simplest way for me to understand is this: God's word, mixed with faith, produces definable action. It is productive. God's word is active, it is alive, and it brings forth fruit in the life of the believer.

However, if a man hears the word but does not believe it then it does not produce anything except self deception. A man who attends church and listens to the preaching, but does not believe it will not be changed for the good. This is the danger of being in the presence of God's word and yet refusing to believe the word. Unbelief produces deception and the embrace of lies.

It is easier to be lazy and live in unbelief. It takes thoughtfulness and attention to hear God's word and believe it. Taking God's word into a believing heart will automatically lead to becoming a doer of the word. God's word will not sit passive in the heart of a believer. It will lead to repentance, to humility, and a desire for good works and action. This is the effect it has on the heart of the believer.

As surely as fire burns wood when it is mixed with oxygen and combustion so also a heart mixed with faith and God's word leads to an explosion of reverent works. This does not contradict the foundation of salvation which is a gift from God received by faith alone. **Ephesians 2:8-9.**

There is a danger for intellectuals who hear the word, study the word, categorize, and analyze the word. The danger is getting into a frame of mind where we think that the act of processing the word is an end in itself. It is not. God's word is purposeful and it is not meant to only be talked about and analyzed into systems. The purpose of God's word is to change us and make us living letters for everyone to read.

James 1:26-27

There may be men in the church who seem to be religious. This is a back handed way of bringing up the thought that there will be people in churches who are not really Christians at all. How can you tell the difference? You might be surprised how much of the New Testament focuses on the difference between true and fake believers. My guess is the majority of people who fill churches have no clue who the Lord Jesus is. They may know facts about God but there is no real personal connection with the Lord.

One way you can discern someone who is a fake Christian or a backslidden Christian is how they control their speech. James repeats this same truth throughout his letter. What a person says in public reveals a lot of what is in his heart and mind. If someone has no restraint in their speech in public it shows they lack self control. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit, so it follows that someone who lacks self-control is deceived. James says their "religion" is vain. I take this to mean they are not

helping anyone with their profession of faith, and indeed, might be hurting the cause of the gospel by claiming to be a Christian but having no control over their tongue.

James went on to teach us what true religion is like. James was not teaching us here how to be saved or to maintain salvation in the life of the believer. He was simply stating what active faith in the true believer looks like to the world outside. A true believer will care about people such as orphans and widows. In other words, a Christian cares about people who cannot help themselves. A widow is someone who is elderly and helpless and no longer has a spouse. In other words they have no family support. In this case, Christians in the church step up to help a person in this situation. Another helpless person category is children who have no parents. Just like a widow without a spouse or family, an orphan is someone who does not have family support or parents. Both of these are examples of situations where Christians step up to help others.

And finally, a true believer in Jesus will strive to rid himself of sin and the influence of the world system. This means putting off the old man, being renewed in the spirit of the mind, and putting on the new man. Simply put, stay in the word, and stay in prayer. Keep your spiritual fire burning every day. Get up and stoke the fire of faith in your heart every morning. Don't let the fire of your faith get cold but continue to feed it with the wood of God's word, with being involved in good works, and staying in fellowship with other believers.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

James Chapter 2

James 2:1-4

James stressed the importance of seeing the church the way God sees the church. People in the church are not seen by God according to their outward appearance or according to how much money they have or what their social standing may be. In the church people are equal. People in the church who judge others by financial status are not seeing the church the way God does.

To view brothers and sisters in the church according to worldly standards is to be a judge with evil thoughts. It is evil to judge people by their outward appearance and financial status. Why is this so important?

God's kingdom is radically different from the world system we currently live in. Within the church we should live according to the principles of God's kingdom. The world evaluates a man by how great a name he makes for himself. A man makes a name for himself by how much money he has and what kind of clothes he wears. It is really as simple as that.

Why is this evil? If you have to ask the question then you do not yet discern how evil your own heart is and how evil the world system is.

This world system is based on pride, lust, and covetousness. It is completely opposed to God and God's kingdom. This world system is described in a spiritual sense as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is the evil spirit in the world system.

The outward machinery of the world system is government, business, and society. These fit together like a hand in a glove. Man has made this system in agreement with Satan and in agreement with Satan's lies that we can be gods knowing good and evil. Everything in the world system is based on the principles of this lie.

The manifestation of this evil world system in the church is when brothers and sisters judge one another by their appearance or financial status. This judging shows we live just like the world and are just as evil in our thinking as the rest of the world.

God called us out of this Babylonian world system. Our thinking should no longer be like the world system, but instead, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind in God's word.

God has called us to put off this old world system and the attitudes which go with it.

Instead, we are to be a new man, like the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved everyone the same. Jesus loved the rich man, and he also loved the lowliest in society. He made no difference in his relationships with people.

If we make a difference in our relationships with people based on position or title then we are no different than the rest of the world. We are not living like Jesus but we are living like the devil when we judge men by outward appearance or social status.

May the Lord help us remember this important truth. Help us to love the church and to see the church the same way the Lord Jesus sees the church.

James 2:5

Read carefully the words of the Lord Jesus and you will soon find out the villain in his parables and sermons were rich folk in this world. How is it American prosperity and faith teachers get it so backwards from what Jesus plainly said in the New Testament?

There was only one rich man in the gospels who was saved. This man gave away his money to those he cheated. I'm referring to the tax collector Zacchaeus, short of stature, but big in heart.

The teaching of the Lord Jesus and the apostles was simple when it came to the rich and poor. Jesus said the gospel was preached to the "poor". People may attempt to spiritualize this and say that "poor" refers to humility of spirit. Look at these scriptures in context. Many times when the poor are mentioned it is in contrast to the rich who persecute them and blaspheme God. This is certainly the context here in the second chapter of James.

James goes so far as to say, astonishingly, that it was the poor that God chose to be rich in faith! This flies in the face of the corrupt American gospel of prosperity. According to James it was the poor man who was rich in faith. It was not the rich man who had faith. The rich were painted throughout James as villains, thieves, and cheaters. He said their money would burn their flesh like fire.

It makes me wonder what motivates Christians to lay down their lives at the altar of money and material success? I can make a guess. Is it a lack of faith in God? According to James it is the poor who

are rich in faith. It is not those with successful careers and phony security in the bank who are rich in faith.

Am I against working? Of course not. I am against working for money! Instead, whatever we do, we should work for the Lord Jesus Christ and not for ourselves. (**Colossians 3:23**). Work is a platform, or a pulpit, for showing Christ through our lives, and don't forget our words as well. Do not be ashamed to share the gospel of Jesus Christ when the opportunity arises.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He shed his blood for the remission of our sins. He was buried in a tomb. He was resurrected three days later. He will return again to this earth at a definite point in the future. His arrival will be an actual event just like his resurrection was an actual event which took place in earth's history.

This return of the Lord Jesus is the blessed hope of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 2:6-9

In James we have some coverage on issues of favoritism and partiality. These ideas, in my opinion, are closely related to nepotism and equality. When we talk about this it is important to put it into a real world context. Let's think about how these ideas affect group dynamics in a work situation, a family, or in a church.

When these attributes control the decisions of leadership it leads to a toxic environment and a lot of hostility in the workplace or in a church.

James discussed partiality toward the rich while dismissing the poor. You can feel the anger in James' rebuke toward favoritism in the church especially between the rich and the poor.

In the scenario described by James the members of the church showed preferential treatment toward those in their fellowship who had money. He mentioned the clothes people wore as symbolic of financial status.

Nothing has changed in 2,000 years since this letter was written. Human nature is still the same, and is just as rampant in ministries and churches as it is in the secular workplace. Actually, I think it is might be more flaunted in churches and ministries. I've suffered from this in the secular workplace, but it is usually less obvious.

Nepotism is when a coworker is shown preference because he is a family member or relative of the boss. The reason it is grievous is because it is not only a promotion or more money which is at stake. The stakes are much higher in ministry because you have the souls of people under your care who are negatively affected. This is a devastating way Satan attacks ministries.

Equality is an ideal, much like communism, which people look to for guidance, but the practical application ends up causing harm and destruction in every direction.

Idealism should not replace biblical definitions and roles or social chaos will result. We see this in modern American life, politics, and culture.

Pray as God's wrath comes we will find grace and mercy to hide us until the disasters are passed over.

James 2:10-13

I've heard people use James to justify salvation by works. They also promote sanctification by striving to follow the ten commandments. People in cults do this. What distinguishes the biblical gospel from cult gospels? Cult gospels stress working for salvation. The emphasis of the biblical gospel is on God's free gift of salvation through faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What these work and law promoters overlook is this verse in James. If we keep the entirety of God's law and yet fail in one point then we are guilty of breaking all of it. If you covet then you break all the laws which tell you not to murder, lie, commit adultery, or honor your parents. If we fail in one point of God's law then we break all the laws. This is seen in the life of David in the story about Bathsheba.

The truth is this: no one can keep God's law perfectly. There is only one man who ever kept the law of God perfectly. His name was Jesus and he died for our sins. He was buried and rose again three days later.

We are all guilty under God's law. The purpose of God's law is to bring us to a place where we stop defending ourselves but instead humble ourselves before God. **Romans 3:19-20**, "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*"

If we cannot be justified or saved by striving to obey God's law then how are we saved and what part does "works" play in the life of the Christian?

We are saved by faith in Christ Jesus. This is all that is necessary for salvation. We are justified by faith in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ. Read **Romans 10:9-10**.

However, the problem is that many people think they "believe" when in reality they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, they believe in doctrines, but they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a religious deception people fall into.

It is to the religious people James said, "You think you believe in God? The devil believes in God too!"

The question James put before us is this: what is the evidence of saving faith? Saving faith has a result or effect. It changes the believer. God's word, mixed with faith, results in a change in the believer. There will be an outpouring of good works. There will be sincerity, love, and concern for others.

It is unfortunate that deceivers use James to build a doctrine of salvation by works, or salvation by following God's law. It is sad because in this same book James said if we break one of God's laws we broke them all. We are guilty and once we have sinned we cannot cancel that sin by good works. Good works do not cancel out previous crimes. Try to do that in a human court of law. Common sense tells us good works do not remove previous crimes. We are still responsible for our previous crimes unless someone takes our place.

Someone has taken our place! Jesus took our place and God's wrath against our sins was extinguished by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can benefit from this by putting your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Read **Acts 16:30-31**.

James 2:14-17

James addressed the problem of talking about faith, or making a profession of faith, but having no evidence of good works in our life which testifies to this intellectual agreement.

This becomes a real problem in religious communities. Churches can become places where people are pew warmers. They attend meetings and listen to preaching but there is no change in their lives. This is the problem James addresses here.

Do not make the mistake of interpreting these passages as saying that James believes in salvation by works. He is teaching us, rather, that real faith produces action. Real faith produces good works.

He gave an example of good works. There were people in the church who needed material help. Should you say "God bless you" but not give them any practical help? This passage addresses the problem of talking about faith but doing nothing practical to help people, especially people in the church who are in need.

May the Lord help us not to turn our back on people who are in need, especially people who are in our church and are obviously in need of help.

James 2:18-20

Here is the heart of the letter of James. Practical application of spiritual life. Faith is expressed through good works. People twist these scriptures in James to say we are saved by good works. James did not say this. He said that real faith will produce good works. We see this in **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

Faith produces action. Faith produces good fruit. Faith produces a practical testimony of love for God and love for neighbor. Intellectual faith, however, does not produce anything but striving over words. Intellectual faith will have a man go to church on a regular basis but never do any good. A man can be religious and not have an ounce of saving faith which produces good works. This is what James warned us about in this letter.

James introduced a startling thought. Devils believe in God. But devils will never be saved or produce good fruit. Their nature is evil, corrupt, sin, and death. They will never have any good works. If they pretend to do good works it is for the purpose of deception. Their works bring death. Yet they believe in God. Only foolish men claim not to believe in God. Even God's sworn enemies believe in him, but foolish men claim God does not exist. Even devils do not claim God does not exist. They know God exists and they tremble.

People claim to believe in God but their faith is not saving faith. Those with saving faith humble themselves at the foot of Calvary and allow Jesus Christ to be the Lord of their life. He is the vine, and they are the branches. They abide in him and produce the fruit of God's kingdom.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

James 2:21-26

The letter of James is Jewish. It is written to early Jewish Christian believers in Jesus. They were saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, but in every way they were also Jews. James used examples that would grab Jewish minded people. He talked about how Abraham's faith led to practical obedience. His faith was completed by his obedience to God. His works proved he had real faith in the Lord.

When James said that a man was justified not only by faith but also by works he did not mean we are saved by good works. He meant that works was evidence that we have been saved. Faith that does not produce anything good cannot be called saving faith. The devils believe in God but it does not produce saving faith or a faith which produces anything good.

This is how we can evaluate our lives. Ask yourself if your faith in God is real, or is it just an intellectual exercise. It is easy to fall into the trap of making faith a way of mentally categorizing doctrines of morality. Faith is more than doctrine and morality. Faith produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Faith must be in God's Son, Jesus Christ, or it will not produce good fruit. Our faith must be firmly anchored in Christ alone. If we allow faith to wander to programs, people, philosophy, or any world religion, then our faith will not produce the works of God in us. Instead, it will produce self-worship and the fruit of death.

Have faith in God, Jesus said. Turn away from self, sin, the world, and the devil and put your faith in Jesus only. Then you will discover that your life will produce good works and those good works will last because they are built on the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James Chapter 3

James 3:1

In other translations the word "masters" is "teachers". Some take this to mean we should avoid becoming Sunday School teachers, or we should avoid the responsibility of instructing people in the word of God.

I don't think that is the correct interpretation. Jesus commanded us to go into all the world and teach others to obey him. Jesus taught us to share the good news of the gospel. Instead, what was pointed out here was the great responsibility we have when we share the gospel.

Years ago I heard about a youth pastor in a church who had a sick child. The man could not afford to get medical help, so he resorted to stealing money from the church to help his child. He was caught and went to prison not just because he was a thief but the judge made it clear he gave the man a harsh punishment because he was also a youth pastor at a church. I think this points to the meaning of what James 3:1 is getting at.

Those who share the gospel are held to a higher standard even by the world and unbelievers. Faith in God and the Bible are mocked by the world because those who represent him fall into public sin.

A Christian represents the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not only preach the gospel, but also live the gospel when no one is watching. Our lives should be above reproach. If there is anything in my life that would cause reproach then I need to pray and ask God for complete deliverance from it. Repent of idolatry, cast down every stronghold, drive out all unbelief, fear, and doubt.

James 3:2-4

James taught that we offend by our words. If we are unable to offend others by our words we would be perfect. What James was referring to was when we say things that are untrue, exaggerated, or just wrong. It is easy to do. I have caught myself at times speaking in front of others and becoming dramatic for effect or to get a reaction from people. This is a stumbling block.

When we speak anything but the truth we become stumbling blocks. We can do this intentionally or accidentally. I hope in my case it was an accident, but when we do speak wrong it shows what is in our heart. Our heart is not as clean and true as we thought. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

It is also possible to not only speak wrong but speak in a wrong spirit or attitude. There were times when I spoke truth but I did not speak truth with an attitude of love or humility. This can also offend people. It is not enough to speak truth but we should speak the truth in love and humility.

Our lives are greatly impacted by our words. At crucial moments, it only takes one word or sentence to completely change the direction of life. This is why it is so important to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

James 3:5-6

It is important to be careful with what comes out of our mouth. I think this is more serious than we realize. A quote from the Lord Jesus on this subject should sober us up. Read **Matthew 12:36**.

James made the point that in the same way a tiny rudder on a big ship determines the ship's path and destination so also this little member of the body affects our life and where we end up.

The Lord taught us that what a man speaks is what he stored up in his heart. This means it is important to pay attention to what we listen to, read, watch, and meditate on. We store up good things in our heart then good things will come out of our mouth. We store up garbage in our heart then that is what will pour out of our mouth.

King David tried to tame his tongue. Read **Psalms 39:1-3**. Keeping quiet caused sorrow for David and lit a fire in his heart. He had to speak. Men are created with a tongue not just for tasting food but for speaking. Language and communication is an integral part of life. David's problem was that he refrained from saying anything good or bad.

We need to speak what is good. Our conversation needs to be filled with grace and seasoned with salt. Here are some scriptures on this subject that I have found to help me: **Psalms 19:14, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6**.

In summary, we need to be careful with words. Take the advice in Proverbs and let our words be as few as possible. (**Proverbs 10:19**).

Our words reflect what we stored up in our hearts. Pay attention to what you allow to brainwash you every day. Pay attention to the media you feed your mind on. Spend more time in God's word, listening to edifying music, and listening to good preaching. When we store up good in our hearts, then good will come out of our mouth.

James 3:7-8

We see a contrast between taming animals and the natural world compared to taming man's tongue. The point was that it is more difficult to tame one's tongue than it is to tame a lion or bear.

What does this tell us? It tells us our life will be greatly impacted by what we say and what comes out of our mouth. I am not in the camp with those who promote the spiritual laws of positive or negative confession. However, the Bible is clear that the tongue and what we say has impact on our life. It will determine a lot about where we end up.

But what controls the tongue? I noticed that before I was a Christian my tongue was constantly filled with curse words. The Bible says that natural man has a tongue like a snake that is filled with poison. Cursing comes easy and natural to the man who does not believe in God or know the Lord Jesus Christ. However, what happened to me after I was born again? What happened when the Holy Spirit moved in and gave me eternal life?

Almost immediately my speech patterns changed. I did not try and stop cussing. I just stopped. I no longer had a compulsion to curse or use foul language. If I did curse it was just because of a habit from years of filthy language. As time went forward from my salvation I noticed that my speech became less and less foul and filled more and more with words of praise, thanksgiving, and positive speech.

I never tamed my own tongue. But when a man is filled with the Holy Spirit he will change his speech patterns. His heart is no longer set on evil, but now the heart is set on the Lord Jesus Christ. Your tongue will follow what is in your heart. This is what the Lord Jesus said. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

It is important to guard our heart above all things. Out of the heart are the issues of life. We are to guard what goes into our ears and eyes and what we think about. We need to learn how to take captive every thought to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to make a decision that we will not put any vile thing before our eyes. Let this be our prayer, "*Turn away my eyes from vanity and make me alive in your ways, oh Lord.*"

James 3:9-10

James pointed out the contradiction of people who say they bless God and yet turn around and curse men. He was basically showing how it is not possible to love God and hate your brother. We find this same statement in 1 John. It is a contradiction to profess love for God and yet hate people. Love for God will cause you to love people. Both love for God and love for people go hand in hand. These are, after all, the greatest commandments. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as you already love yourself.

In context James was talking about taming the tongue, which is impossible for someone who is not first of all controlled by the Holy Spirit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If a man's heart is controlled by idolatry, covetousness, and lust then what comes out of his mouth will be self-worship and cursing. However, if a man is filled with the Holy Spirit and his heart is set on the Lord then what comes out of his mouth will be praise to God, thanksgiving, and words of encouragement.

He spoke to the church in this letter. He says, "my brethren", so he was speaking to actual brothers in the church. He gave us a way to discern true and false brothers. People in the church who use their mouth to slander, gossip, and curse should be discerned and we need to ask the question if the profession of faith from these individuals is genuine. What does the Bible say to do if someone claims to be a brother in Christ but obviously does not live or speak like one? What do you do with a wolf in sheep's clothing?

There is a lot of wisdom for discernment in the book of James. We should pay attention to what comes from our mouth, and listen carefully to the words of people around us. What do their words say about their character and true profession?

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

James 3:11-12

We are compared to water and trees. If water is bitter then the source of that water is bitter. If the fruit on a tree is bad then the tree must be bad. However, when it comes to human beings we tend to miss the point. When someone is bitter and bears bad fruit we overlook this and tend to still try to believe they are something they are not. I've fallen into this trap before with people who were close to me at one time in my life. I wanted to believe the best of them because I loved them, but their life always had bad fruit. They were susceptible to lies and quick to turn their back on truth. Why did I think we were of the same family? Those who believe truth are in God's family. Those who love lies are in the devil's family. It is not anymore complicated than that. It is that simple. Those who love lies are of their father the devil. Those who love the truth are of the Lord Jesus.

James demonstrated to us how to discern. Sin always makes us want to complicate things. Sin will take away discernment. However, truth and light will make things simple and plain. There is sin and death. There is righteousness and life. There are two trees. One is the tree of life. One is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Notice the tree of knowledge is double-minded. Every person who loves lies will be double minded. They speak with a forked tongue. They say one thing and do the opposite. They are unable to recognize the contradictions in their speech and life.

There is only one way for any of us to bear good fruit. It is to be planted completely in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are separated from the Lord Jesus we will immediately bear bad fruit. We will have bitter water and bad fruit if we are separated from the Lord Jesus. Sin and self-worship separate us from the Lord Jesus Christ. To restore union with the Lord Jesus we must confess our sins and renounce our sins. **1 John 1:9** promises us that God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Self-worship means that we believe we provide for ourselves and protect ourselves. We agree with the world system and have no faith in God as our provider and protector. This is self worship. The entire world system is based on self worship.

Turn away from self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn your heart toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Call on his name. Confess your sins to him and ask him to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Pray and ask the Lord to unite your heart that you may walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

James 3:13-14

Here we have a contrast again. The contrast is between wisdom and bitterness. This is a pattern we see in James, and indeed, this contrast goes all through the Bible all the way from Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Lot and Abraham, Saul and David, Israel and Judah.. it goes on and on. What is God trying to teach us?

A man who has true faith will produce a life in agreement with that reality. A man who is only religious and has no real faith in the Lord Jesus will produce the same fruit as the world system. We need to be careful to discern between true spiritual life and dead religion. The greatest snare for people is not knowing the difference between religion and true spiritual life in Christ. It goes back to the choice between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Life is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Abiding in Christ will produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit Paul listed for us in **Galatians 5**. However, if we are unbelieving our life will produce bitter envying, strife, and lying. We will make a profession, but our profession will be a lie because we do not believe what we are saying. We do not agree with the truth, but we agree with the lie.

Agreement with God or God's enemy is the basic difference. Adam and Eve knew the truth of God's word. The word of the Lord walked with them and they had a relationship with him. However, when the serpent showed up they quickly abandoned their faith in the word of God and agreed with the word of the serpent. The result was death, darkness, and destruction ever since.

A wise man will have a good conversation. His lifestyle will reflect his wisdom. People who are deceived may intellectually go along with truth, but in their heart they worship their own self. A wise man will produce good fruit. A wise man will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. A wise man will fear the Lord and walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Renounce all other gods, philosophies, programs, and systems. Abandon this world system and flee to the only one who can save you: the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 3:15-18

Many years ago I had a friend who started reading Christian counseling books. These books were manuals on reinterpreting secular concepts of psychiatry into Christian terminology. I always compare this to eating sugar coated poison. My friend already had a predisposition towards position and pride, and so was easily tempted by the concepts in the books he was reading.

The concepts in these books were just repackaged paganism. One sentence or phrase he started repeating was this: "*all truth is God's truth*". That sounded like a wise proverb, but the more I watched his life and the effects of his "Christian" counseling books on his ministry the more I came to believe that his proverb was a deception. *All truth is **NOT** God's truth.*

These scriptures in James provide a biblical framework for thinking and believing in contrast to my friend's psychological framework. Not all "wisdom" comes from God. Some wisdom comes from the devil. You can tell the difference by the results. The fruit of God's wisdom is purity, peace, gentleness, mercy. The devil's wisdom leads to envy, strife, and confusion.

The end result of my friend was he eventually left the ministry. He served as a Pastor for several years, but eventually he was back on the streets on drugs again. The last time I heard from him he called me from prison. Did those books on Christian counseling get him there? I'm not suggesting that but it was a symptom of his spirit which was not satisfied with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He needed something more than what the Bible had to give him.

Beware of adding secular concepts and ideas to the gospel. Beware of adding systems, steps, and philosophy to the gospel. What we fill our hearts with determines the outcome of our lives. We need to feed our spirit on the pure word of God and leave the psychology to unbelievers.

James Chapter 4

James 4:1-3

Wars have a spiritual origin. James taught us that war and fighting come from a spiritual origin. It comes from lust that wars within us. All outward violence and wars come out of the heart of men. Read **Matthew 15:19**. Nations can come up with different reasons for making war but this is the real reason. It is because of lust in the heart of greedy, selfish people.

James said we could just pray and ask God for things but God doesn't answer prayers if the motive is lust. If we are asking for something because of covetousness in our heart then God will not answer that prayer.

Most of what is taught in the prosperity gospel is based on human covetousness and greed. They teach they can have wealth if they claim it from God, but James contradicted this false teaching. James taught us if we pray and have lust in our hearts then God is not going to answer those prayers. Why should he? See also **1 Timothy 6:8-10** and **Proverbs 11:4**.

James 4:4

It is possible to make oneself an enemy of God and not be aware of it. All you have to do is love the world.

Which brings up the question: what is the world? What is this "world" the scripture speaks about here.

The outward machinery of the world is government, business, and society. The inner spirit of this machinery is the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. Read **1 John 2:15-16**.

The Lord Jesus made a difference between the outward machinery of the world and the inward evil spirit of the world system when he prayed to the heavenly Father. Read **John 17:15**. Jesus showed there is a world system everyone lives in. He does not pray for his Father to take them out of the world system of government, business, and society. But he did pray the Father keep them from the evil of the world system: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

To love the world system is to esteem government, business, and society over the Lord. When we love the world we put our trust in government, business, or society.

When our daily work is more important and more valuable than our relationship with God then we have become an enemy of God. A friend to the world is an enemy of God.

We live in this system but we are forbidden to love this system which sets itself up against the kingdom of God. Everything in this world system is controlled behind the scenes by the devil and his minions. Read **Ephesians 6:12**.

This world system is not the kingdom of God. Jesus made that clear. His kingdom is different from this present world system we are living in. This world system is based on position, power, and pride. The kingdom of God is the exact opposite which Jesus taught his disciples multiple times.

The love of the world is injected into us at a young age. We are taught that our goal in life is to grow up and "make a name" for ourselves. This is the evil which was exposed at the tower of Babel. This is the same evil which Jesus exposed when he made the demons possessing the man in the Gadarenes expose their name "legion". The world is set up according to names and numbers. You see this pattern everywhere, in government, business, and society.

To accomplish anything in the world system you have to establish a name for yourself, and then you add power to your name through numbers. Those numbers are people and money. This is the way of the devil. Promotion of one's name and building power and influence through numbers.

If you read the Bible carefully you will see God does the exact opposite of this. He always chooses those who have no names, those who are humble, lowly, and of no account. He then accomplishes his purpose through either one man, or through small groups of people who have no strength in themselves. This pattern is seen repeatedly in the history of Israel and in the church.

Why are those who are friends of the world called adulterers? God views love of the world system as complete betrayal of the kingdom of God. When we dedicate ourselves to promoting our own name or business for the sake of creating money (power, influence), then we have in practical terms betrayed the kingdom of God. The only way to escape this is to do everything for the glory of God. We can't just say we are working for Jesus. We must do this in a real and practical way. We must live in a humble and self denying way.

The Christian can still be a businessman but he must be consecrated to the Lord. His work is done for the Lord and not for himself or others. Read **Colossians 3:23**. Work and business is to be used as a platform and opportunity for the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any other purpose is for self-interest and love of self and love of the world system.

James 4:5

When I was a brand new Christian in 1989 I was a resident in a Christian residential program. After I surrendered my heart to the Lord Jesus I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I experienced things which I thought everyone experienced but eventually found out what happened to me was not business as usual for Christians.

Some nights the Lord Jesus stood at the foot of my bed and I could just feel waves of God's love for me. It was overwhelming. I would cry myself to sleep many nights.

I could hear God speak to me sometimes. One time he spoke to me this Bible verse reference. He simply said to me, "*James 4:5*"

I looked up this Bible verse and did not understand what it meant. I think I originally looked this up in the NIV Bible which did not help matters.

Over time and meditating on this verse I understand it a little better.

Some of the words seem to have a negative meaning. The words envy and lusteth seem to have a negative meaning. However, in the context of what is being said here, "*lusteth to envy*" means a passionate and intense protective feeling. The Holy Spirit who lives in me watches over me with an intense protective feeling.

The Lord watches our lives intensely. I think this is more true for some people or some people can feel the intensity of God's gaze more than others. This sense of feeling God's gaze is another way of describing the fear of the Lord. It causes a person to live much differently.

It makes you care about what God thinks of you.

When I was in high school my parents put my sister and I into a private school for one year. During that year I had a history teacher who was a Christian. Because he was a Christian he cared about his students as individuals. I could feel that concern from him and when I learned he was having a Bible study I would show up. After awhile I was the only student who showed up for these Bible studies. As a result of the personal attention I got from this teacher I made straight A's in his class. Most of my other classes I failed or got low grades. I hated school. But because this teacher knew my name and I had a personal friendship with him I made perfect grades in his class.

This explains to me what this means. The Lord knows my name. His Spirit lives inside of me and his Spirit is intensely protective of me. He wants me to love the Lord with all of my heart and utterly forsake everything that is in the world system.

The Holy Spirit lives in me. He has shown me that the Lord Jesus knows my name. I heard him call my name. He called me "Mike" which at the time I heard him say this name I did not commonly go by that name. I was called "Mack" by people for many years. But the Lord spoke to me and he said, "Mike". Ever since then I've tried to ask people to call me "Mike" and not "Mack" anymore.

The Lord knows me. He is intensely protective of me. As a result I try my best to please him and learn all the lessons in his classroom.

James 4:6

Here is a principle seen in the Bible: God opposes the proud. The man controlled by pride is an enemy of God. Pride is the chief character quality of Satan, the enemy of God, and those who follow pride are followers of the devil.

How can we identify pride? In America an easy way to spot pride is just listen to people talk about themselves. They boast about how much they love themselves. This reeks of pride and self-centered living. Living this way leads a person deeper into darkness and deception.

We often think of pride as a cartoon character walking around with his nose in the air. However, this is only a caricature of pride. The biblical definition of pride is loving self, exalting self, and promoting one's own name and self. It is not surprising that websites which give people the tools to promote self are popular. Websites like Facebook are so popular because they tap into the darkest and most powerful of Satan's temptations: pride. Self-love defines American culture.

The Lord opposes people who exalt themselves. America has been in the business of exalting self for quite a while. We export pride along with every kind of perversion all over the world. Americans think it is life's goal to make a name for themselves and to bring a lot of people underneath their name. This is not just in business but is rampant in churches as well.

God opposes the proud. All of this pride will be brought down to the pit.

On the other side of this is an encouraging word: God gives grace to the humble. To those who deny self and refuse to promote their name God gives grace. He shows mercy and grace to those who humble their hearts and do not live for self.

Turn away from living for self. Ask God to deliver you from the snare of pride and self exaltation. Turn away from that darkness and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

James 4:7

Even before I was a Christian I had heard of the devil. I saw enough already that I knew there was evil in some people. I felt at times some force moving in me which made me think, say, and do things which were bizarre. I might chalk it up to just being crazy except for the fact that when I got saved I changed immediately. I know without a doubt the dramatic change which took place in my life at salvation was proof that I had been infested with demons.

What causes a man to get messed up with evil spirits? It starts with rebellion against God. When you exalt yourself against God and live according to pride then you are in the devil's camp. The enemy will move in to your life and wreck havoc.

The way to get the devil out is the opposite of how you let him in. Instead of rebelling against God you need to submit yourself to God. You need to lay down your opinions, thoughts, or beliefs and take

God's Word as absolute truth. When you do I promise the devil will flee from you. It doesn't mean he won't try to tempt you back again, but he will flee when you submit yourself to God and resist him.

This is basic spiritual warfare. Submission to God puts us underneath God's protection. When we take our life back into our own hands we remove ourselves from God's protection.

I think of this like an umbrella. As long as you stay under God's umbrella of protection then you don't get wet with darkness and sin. However, when you decide to go out from underneath the umbrella you are immediately hit with the rain of the devil's temptations. It is automatic. It doesn't matter if you believe it or not. It doesn't matter if you agree with this or not. This is just how it is, plain and simple.

If you want God to protect you, then you have to submit to him and come underneath his Word for protection. You need to learn how to obey, follow, and submit to the truth of God's word. This is a basic lesson about spiritual warfare, and if you can't do this there is little hope you will ever find freedom from demons, addictions, and bondage.

The willingness to humble ourselves before God is the first step. After this, there is a lot to learn about what God has done for us through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ that we find consistent victory over the power of the devil. We cannot overcome in our strength, but we can find victory through an increasing knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Stay in the word. Stay in prayer. Make a decision to humble yourself, deny yourself, and be glad when God corrects you through scripture and through other people. A willingness to be corrected goes along with having a humble heart.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

James 4:8-10

Here is an amazing promise from the Lord. This is one of the most precious promises I think I have ever found. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. When I cry out to the Lord in sincerity, and humility, and repentance... He hears! And he not only hears but he draws near to anyone who cries out to him. I know this from experience but beyond my experience I have God's word which never changes.

There were some desperate times in my life when there was no where else to turn. Those are good places to be in. It is like the account of Israel standing between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. Nowhere to go except God. God then makes a way for us where there was no way. He creates a road in front of our feet.

Here I am again in this place where no one can help me but the Lord. I think the Lord likes bringing me into these places where my entire focus is on him and his promises.

Do we know what it means "he will draw near to you"? I have had a taste of this, and it is the sweetest thing one can ever taste. In his presence there is fullness of joy. I know this. I'm not speaking theory. It is a fact. There is no joy like touching the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no love like feeling the love of

Jesus for you. It is like a warm blanket on a cold, winter morning. It is like feeling the sun rising on your face. It is like the awe and inspiration of standing on the highest mountain peak and looking at miles and miles of world beneath your feet. There is no comparison to being in the presence of Jesus.

Draw near to God. He will draw near to you. What else do you need?

James 4:11-12

It is important to the Lord that we be careful with what we say about other people. The number one thing about the enemy which sets him apart is his tongue and mouth. He speaks evil and accuses people. We see this clearly in the book of Job that the devil makes accusations against the saints. He accuses God to the saints and he accuses the saints to God. His purpose is to drive a wedge between God and man, and in part he was successful, but the Lord Jesus brought us back to God. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Because of what the Lord Jesus accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection the enemy's accusations carry no legal weight against us. We can plead the blood of the Lamb against every accusation of the enemy.

Do not imitate the devil by speaking evil about people. When we gossip or slander then we are walking in the footsteps of the devil. We think, somehow, that the law of God does not apply to us when we point a finger at someone else. But we are not above the law. When we accuse someone else we are witnessing against ourselves that we know right and wrong. But are we able to keep the law? No, we fail, and if we have shown no mercy to others, then will mercy be shown to us? If we have not forgiven others then will our sins be forgiven?

The Lord sees everything that is good or evil. We should look for the good in people and not the evil. We should look to encourage people instead of tearing them down. There is a place for biblical correction, but remember to do everything in love. Is confrontation and correction motivated by love and a desire to help the person? If so, then the person will barely even know they were corrected by you.

Let us, therefore, determine that we will not speak evil but instead we will look for the good in brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us use our mouth to edify, exhort, build up, and comfort the church.

James 4:13-16

These verses confront the attitude of thinking we are in control of our lives. We make plans and do things without taking any consideration of what God's plan are and what the Lord wants us to do. We think that we have all the time in the world to do what we want to do with our lives, but here James shows us that our lives are actually short in duration. We should try to find out what God's will is for us instead of going about living life like we are the ones in control. What does God want us to do? What is God's plan for us?

These verses also reveal that the heart of men is naturally set on making money. However, this is not the true purpose and goal of the Christian. It should never be the goal of the Christian to make money and to succeed in the world system. If that is the goal then we are no different than unbelievers. Instead, in whatever we do, we should do it for the glory of God and for furthering the gospel. Work is our platform to share the gospel and influence people for God. After all, we are the salt of the earth and we are the light of the world. Our goal is different from the unbeliever. The unbeliever's only goal is self:

providing for self, protecting self, and worshiping himself. This is the goal of every unbeliever. Are you living like this? Is your only goal in life yourself? Then you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus said if anyone will come after him he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him.

These verses remind us of how short life is. We should make it our priority to invest time and energy into what will truly count for eternity. Read, study, memorize, and meditate on God's word. Put God's word into practice in your life. Love one another. Love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Do all you can, while you still can, to bring glory to God and build the body of Christ.

James 4:17

This should put the nail in the coffin for those who believe that people are basically "good". The Bible declares that men are sinners. We are born in sin, participate in sin, and swim in a system that is based on the principle of sin. There is no hope of knowing anything different except sin. Even the little we know to do good, if we fail to do it, we commit sin. Not only do you sin when you miss the mark through breaking God's laws, but you also sin when you know what you should do and fail to do it. This is the sin of negligence.

This verse convinces me there is no hope except through the blood of the Lamb. It is only through the completed, finished work of the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection that I have any hope of righteousness. There is no righteousness to be found by striving to obey God's law. There is only condemnation, guilt, and regret in that direction.

The only hope is to put our faith in the goodness of God displayed through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

This shows us that avoiding sin is not good enough. We must actively be engaged in doing what is right. We need to put off sin. But we also must put on what is good. Paul describes this in **Ephesians 4:22-24**.

The Christian life is about putting off "the old man", being renewed "in the spirit of your mind", and then putting on "the new man". This process begins, proceeds, and ends by putting our faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ through his death, burial, and resurrection. This is also described as the process of justification, sanctification, and glorification. We were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. This affects our spirit, our soul, and our body. Read **1 Thessalonians 5:23**.

We are completely helpless to do the right thing in our own strength. Without the power of the Holy Spirit we can never produce good works in our life. We need to ask God everyday to fill us with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who will enable us to do the right thing at the right time. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he prepared for us beforehand to walk in them. Walk in agreement with the Lord, humble yourself under his correction and pruning, and pray that God will produce the fruit of his kingdom in and through the life which he gave you.

James Chapter 5

James 5:1-6

James charges full force at rich men. Why? What is going on here? If you listen to modern American preachers they will surely find a way to explain these verses away as not meaning what it plainly says. Rich men: weep and how for misery that is coming? Remember the story that Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus? Why is the rich man in hell? Why did Jesus say it is nearly impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God? We should pause a moment and think about this. Some people cannot bring themselves to consider the implications of these verses because their heart is so set on covetousness, greed, and self worship. They cannot stop to think about what having riches says about a person's values and character.

Rich people are not put in a good light. There are a lot of other places in the Bible where riches are an indication of the wrath of God on a person's life. Go through the Bible and look at what it says about money and riches, and do not listen to modern American preachers who twist scriptures regarding prosperity. Even preachers that I respect I have heard get this wrong. It is difficult to understand what the Bible says about money in our modern day era because so many people are already rich. They do not want to put themselves in the same category as what James is talking about.

It is the poor who are rich in faith. Not the rich. The rich are condemned in the Bible. The poor and humble are exalted.

Do you have a lot of money? You would do well to start finding a way to give it away as fast as you can. Give it to support the preaching of the gospel. Give it to the poor. Give it to whatever good cause you can find, but do not hoard it or keep it. Do not put your trust in money or wealth. Put your trust in God and give your money away to people who are using it for the kingdom or to people who desperately need your help.

James 5:7-9

I had a friend when I was a young Christian who had a hard time believing in the return of the Lord. I could tell he had not read the entire New Testament, because you can't go through a book of the New Testament without being confronted with the return of the Lord. From the gospels all the way through Revelation the return of the Lord is taught. It is the blessed hope of the church. Read Titus 2:13.

The return of the Lord is closer now than when James wrote "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". We are closer now than any other generation to the return of the Lord.

This fact of the sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ is to inspire hope and encouragement for the church. It is also a purifying truth for when we set our hearts on it and meditate on this we will live a pure and holy life. **1 John 3:2-3**, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*

We are exhorted to set our mind on the return of the Lord and live in view of the return of the Lord. This is basic Christian living. Don't waste your life following false idols of money, position, and

pleasure. Instead, invest your life in what is eternal. A big part of this is cultivating a fear of the Lord and a constant expectant attitude of his return.

Sadly most of what is heard from American pulpits is self-centered. Decide to focus on the truths which pertain to the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of the greatest truths is his return. How should this affect our daily lives? Do we ever pause in our day to wonder if this could be the day the Lord returns?

Matthew 24:44-51 give us a good framework for developing a fear of God and an attitude of expecting his soon return.

James 5:10-11

Several things I learn from these verses. We are to consider the prophets in scripture. Prophets were not only prophets but what they said, but also their life testimony was a message from God. What God in them, to them, and through them is all part of being a prophet. We are to look at their lives, as well as their words. He specifically mentions Job in this context so we know as well that the Bible considers Job as a prophet. How was he a prophet? His life story was a message from God. God testifies through the life history and account of the man Job.

How is my life a story for God? Does my life bring glory to God? Am I strong in faith and give glory to God? Do my trials and problems cause me to cast away my confidence in the Lord? Or do I go from strength to strength and faith to faith giving honor and glory to God?

After all the trials were over God rewarded Job's faith and patience. All the Lord wants from us is to trust in him and be patient. At the right time the Lord will lift us up and reward us for our faith and patience. Our part is to stand firm and not be moved away from what God's word says to us. Read **Ephesians 6:13**.

James 5:12

This is why people protest "swearing" in a court of law by placing a hand on a Bible and saying "I do solemnly swear". If I'm not mistaken I think this is now changed where people say "I affirm" instead of "I swear".

Be a man of your word. When you say something always tell the truth and mean what you say. Do not say something and then change your mind. When someone asks you a question let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" mean "no". Live such a life of integrity that people will not have to guess if you are telling the truth or lying.

This comes down to a life of integrity and being a man who stands by his word. Don't say something you don't mean. Don't exaggerate. Don't boast. Don't make any promises that you cannot keep.

There is a lot in James which deals with our speech. We are not to use the tongue for lying, swearing, gossip, tearing down other people, or saying something we do not believe. James teaches us to have correct speech in life.

Make sure your words are in agreement with the truth. The only way we can do this is to soak our hearts and minds in the truth of scripture.

James 5:13-15

I've seen these verses applied in different ways. I've been in churches where people came to the front of the church at the end of a service and elders anointed people with oil and prayed for them. I'm not sure if that was the right application of this verse but I've seen it done that way.

We should pray for people who are sick. Without a doubt Jesus healed the sick. As his followers we should pray for the sick. The Lord is able to heal people and deliver them from afflictions and sickness. We should always have an attitude of faith that God can and does heal people who are sick. Don't dismiss the supernatural and miraculous work of God.

Notice healing takes place within the context of church. There is a need for believers to gather, pray, and minister to one another. We are called to help edify the church.

Christians are not always happy. People suffer from afflictions and sickness. Trials, problems, and suffering are a normal part of the Christian life. The Lord overcame death, hell, and the grave. How much easier is it for him to heal our sickness?

Do not assume if you are not healed it is because of a lack of faith. Some people teach that if do not have a certain quality or quantity of faith then you are not healed. This is NOT always the case. There are examples of a lack of faith hindering Jesus from healing people. However, this is not always the case. Do not assume this about a brother or sister in Christ. It is uncharitable to make assumptions about the relationship other people have with God. Remember Job's friends made a lot of false assumptions about Job and were rebuked by God.

Healing should be taught in the church. Many churches never teach this and do not give any place in the church service for this. We need to teach about God's healing and also make this available for people within a church service.

James 5:16-18

This verse does not give Catholic priests the right to listen to anyone's confession. Read it again. Confess your faults "one to another". This is not talking about one man listening to the confessions of people. It is Christians bearing the burdens of one another, praying for one another, and for healing.

Elijah the prophet was mentioned. He was mentioned as an example of prevailing prayer. He prayed and God responded by sending a drought on Israel. When Elijah prayed again the Lord sent rain. This was an example of the power of praying to God. Nothing is too difficult for the Lord. The Lord is not limited. The only thing which is limited is our faith in God.

These verses show us that Elijah was not a super saint. He was a man just like us. He prayed and the Lord heard him. We can also pray, like Elijah, and the Lord will hear our prayers.

What am I praying for? I am praying for big changes in my life. The Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I could ever ask or think.

James 5:19-20

These final verses point to our responsibility to evangelize and bring people to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the highest privileges in life to lead someone to the Lord. To be part of that process of planting God's word and seeing those seeds bear fruit in the salvation of a soul is an amazing thing to experience.

How do we convert someone? Some think we should to be like the world in order to convert people to Christ. This has never made much sense to me. Why would someone in the world convert to being a Christian if the Christian is no different than the world? What is there to convert to?

Notice that there is a "way" which is in error. The way of error is unbelief. When we do not believe in the Bible or the Lord Jesus then our life will be in error. We will live in darkness when we do not believe in the Lord.

To convert someone from unbelief, then, is to cover a multitude of sins. They can find forgiveness for sin and also that person will never get into all the sin they would have otherwise. Stopping one person will have a ripple effect. That person is no longer influencing others toward sin and unbelief but will become an agent of righteousness.

May the Lord help us to win souls for him. **He who wins souls is wise.**

The First Epistle of Peter

1 Peter Chapter 1

1 Peter 1:1

Peter addressed his audience as "*strangers scattered*" into different places. If we meditate on this verse we can learn a lot from Peter's choice of words. It is not only Peter we are hearing. The Holy Spirit called these Christians strangers scattered over the world. I think we should try to understand what this description of these Christians meant.

The Lord Jesus taught his disciples they were not "of this world". Read **John 15:19**.

The world is a system which includes government, business, and society built in rebellion against God. It is a system that copies God but turns his character upside down and inside out. These are the kingdoms of the world which belong to Satan. John described this world system as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life in **1 John 2:16**.

Christians are strangers in this world system. We are called to act as salt and light in this system. Some are called out of the world system completely to act as gifts to the church and wash the feet of the saints. These are gifts to the church who give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word. For the most part Christians live and work within the framework of the world system. Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father in **John 17:15** that we would not be taken out of the world but protected from the evil of this Antichrist system.

We are strangers living in this world. Just like Jesus our kingdom is from another place. Our home is not located in the current world system which is based on idolatry, covetousness, pride, ambition, and greed. Our home is another place which is based on righteousness, holiness, love, and purity.

Not only are we strangers but we have also been scattered. Early Christians were scattered everywhere even when this was against their will. More than likely it was their desire to be settled and have a home, family, and grow old taking care of themselves and their families. This was not the fate of these early Christians, and it is not the fate of those who live godly in Christ Jesus. (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

We are scattered to the wind like seeds in a plowed field because this is the most effective way the entire world can be reached with the gospel. The Lord Jesus sends the gospel out into the world through the hearts of believing, obedient Christians. It is not gospel tracts Jesus hands out on the street. It is people. It is people filled with the Holy Spirit, who hold within themselves the precious deposit of eternal life. We are holy vessels filled with a glorious infusion of eternity. This eternal life within us is carried to one person after another by Christians. It is not carried by books, pamphlets, or tracts. It is carried by people who lay down their lives every day for the truth. We are the testimony of Jesus. His words are inscribed on our hearts and those words come out of our mouth, in our attitudes, reactions, and in our daily relationships with people in the marketplace, workplace, and on the street. We are God's letter to this generation.

We are strangers scattered for the purpose of spreading the fragrance and aroma of Christ Jesus wherever we go. Don't get too comfortable wherever you may find yourself.

It is our tendency to get comfortable and want to put down roots. The Lord will use persecution from unbelievers if he has to get the church moving. He allowed widespread persecution in the early church to scatter these strangers all over the known world. Eventually these same methods are employed over and over again so that Christians will pour out their life. We are vessels to be poured out. We are not to be put on the shelf to be admired or hoarded. Our lives are to be poured out for the salvation of others. We are saved in order that we too may die that others may have eternal life.

This dying is a daily process of taking up our cross, denying ourselves, and keeping our heart fixed on Jesus. We are united with him in death, burial, and resurrection. We die daily so that others may receive eternal life and live forever with us and the Father.

We are strangers scattered throughout the earth, moving on the surface of this planet with one purpose: the gospel, the good news – Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and receive eternal life.

1 Peter 1:2

Beginning in Genesis we are taught by God through example and instructions that the way to receive forgiveness is by the shedding of blood. The first example is when God himself killed animals to provide coverings for Adam and Eve after they sinned and became naked before God and themselves.

The blood of animals sacrificed on an altar is at the heart of Old Testament ordinances for the forgiveness of sins. This did not begin at the law given by Moses but went back to Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and all those who followed in the faith of Abraham. God's kingdom order in obtaining salvation and forgiveness from the penalty of sin is the shedding of blood.

Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God and by shedding his blood at Calvary we obtain eternal redemption and forgiveness of sins. The blood of animals was a temporary religious system and shadow pointing toward the ultimate blood sacrifice. (**Hebrews 9:13**). This blood sacrifice of Jesus is set forth by the heavenly Father to provide for the propitiation of sins. (**Romans 3:25**).

The specific wording of "*sprinkling of the blood*" goes back to the original Passover Israel had in Egypt before the Exodus. On the same night the death angel went through Egypt and killed the firstborn children of the Egyptians the Jewish people put the sprinkling of the lamb's blood on the doorpost of their houses. God demonstrated that it is through the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb that we escape God's wrath and receive forgiveness of sins. (**Hebrews 11:27-28**).

We should take this scripture to heart. The Holy Spirit told us through Peter that we are chosen by the foreknowledge of God to be sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit. He applies the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ to us. It is God who applies the shed blood of Jesus Christ to our lives. It is our proper response to believe in the work Jesus accomplished for us at Calvary. All those who believe in what the Lord Jesus did escape from God's wrath. All those who reject Jesus owe justice their blood for sin. God is just; he is also the justifier of those who believe the gospel. Read **Ephesians 1:7** and **Colossians 1:14**.

1 Peter 1:3

Even the enemies of Jesus acknowledged a doctrine of resurrection though they may not have believed in it. When the Sadducees cross examined Jesus it was with the doctrine of the resurrection which they did not believe. It is interesting we have so much information from the Lord Jesus about the truth of resurrection in response to men who did not believe in it themselves.

Not only did the enemies of Jesus acknowledge the doctrine of a resurrection at the last day but also the friends of Jesus spoke of this. When Jesus came to Mary and Martha after Lazarus died. He challenged them about resurrection before he raised Lazarus from the dead. They acknowledged they believed in a general resurrection at the last day. Jesus did not correct them in regards to this belief in a last day resurrection. He pointed to himself as the resurrection in the present tense. Where Jesus is there is resurrection life and power. This shows us that resurrection is not a doctrine but the person of Jesus. (**John 11:25**).

From reading the New Testament we find the resurrection discussed by unbelievers, believers, but most of this conversation was in regard to a religious doctrine of some distant future event. When Jesus spoke to Martha he brought all of the truth of the future event and the truth of Bible doctrine into the immediate, present tense within himself. He is resurrection and life. He proved this by raising Lazarus from the dead.

We learn that resurrection is not just an idea or a doctrine but is tied up with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus went to his crucifixion he said the Father gave him power to lay down his life and power to take it up again. Jesus therefore has power over life and death. He proved this when he died on the cross. He committed himself completely to his heavenly Father and completed the work of redemption and salvation for us. He then rose from the dead on the third day.

Some people in those days did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Paul had to combat this in his own preaching ministry. In **1 Corinthians 15** he laid out the teaching of resurrection using simple illustrations of life and death in the physical world which we can see and understand. Also, Paul's used the logic that if the resurrection is not true then Christ did not rise from the dead. If Christ did not rise from the dead then our faith is in vain. The entire Christian faith rests on the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is absolutely essential and is the foundation of our faith as Christians. If there is no resurrection then there is no hope and no faith.

But Christ is risen from the dead, hallelujah! He made sure there were witnesses to his death, burial, and resurrection. These witnesses were the disciples who followed him and those who put their faith in him. They gave their lives for the truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. (**2 Timothy 2:8**).

It is by faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ we are saved and receive eternal life. Sometimes people may wonder how much does a man have to know in order to be saved. At the least a man should know that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and that he was raised from the dead on the third day. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).

1 Peter 1:4

Inheritance is introduced early in the Bible when God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan. This promised land was the inheritance of Abraham's descendants.

Abraham had more than one descendant. The descendants of God's promise came through his son Isaac. These descendants inherited the land of Canaan when they were led into the land under Joshua. However, we know from the New Testament that Abraham not only had physical descendants but also spiritual descendants. The Bible teaches us we are the children of Abraham if we have the same faith in God Abraham had.

To these spiritual descendants God also promised an inheritance. This inheritance is mentioned by Peter as "*incorruptible, undefiled, fadeth not away*". In other words, this is an eternal inheritance.

Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions and follow Him. He promised the rich young ruler if he did this he would have treasure in heaven. (**Luke 18:22**). Also, Jesus taught us to store up treasures in heaven. He said where our treasure was there would our heart be also. It is important to understand that emphasis on earthly treasure is the opposite of what Jesus taught. Jesus did not teach we should invest in earthly treasures but in heavenly treasures. Read **Matthew 6:19-21**.

The emphasis in the gospel is on the heavenly inheritance which is incorruptible and does not fade away. Focusing on temporary treasure on earth is putting our focus on what is temporary and fading away. Paul wrote about the temporary in **2 Corinthians 4:18**. When men who claim to speak for God only focus on temporary things ask yourself the question: where is the man's heart? Is it on heaven? Is it on the earth? If a man's heart is set on earth he is not speaking for God but for himself. A man who speaks for God will point you to heaven and to what is eternal and invisible.

Some people are preoccupied with whether or not a Christian can lose their salvation. I think it is well established in the Bible that if a man is born again then he is in the Father's hands and no one can take him out of the Father's hands. God will carry on to completion the good work he started in us. I would

add to this I think it is possible a Christian can have loss of inheritance. There is a difference between salvation and inheritance. The Lord wants to give us inheritance as well as salvation.

When speaking to the Ephesians Paul made it clear that Christians who live like the world and follow a lifestyle of the world lose inheritance. (**Ephesians 5:5**).

We should live in accordance with who we are. This is only possible by knowing you belong to Christ and are united with Christ in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. It is through our complete identification with Jesus that the Holy Spirit moves in us to will and do according to God's will. We are set free from the power of sin by the Holy Spirit as we abide in the finished work of Christ. Our minds can be easily distracted away from this fact especially in today's world where there are constant distractions through entertainment, video, and audio. Our senses, our minds, are overwhelmed today by the flood of video and audio through TV and the internet.

It is important for us to refocus on the basic Christian faith. The basic foundation of what we believe is the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will move us into experiencing oneness with the eternal accomplishments in Christ if we allow him and if we are willing to submit to God. The Lord is as close as our acknowledgment that we have sinned and that we need a Savior. Turn from self and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. He died so we can live in eternity with him.

1 Peter 1:5-12

It is amazing that angels are interested in man's salvation. Our salvation reveals to them more about the God they serve. It demonstrates God is just and that he is the justifier of those who have faith in Christ Jesus. This scripture confirms the existence of angels and that they are preoccupied with those who are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is not just a New Testament idea. Salvation did not begin with the book of Matthew. All of the prophets pointed toward the plan of God in redeeming mankind through faith in Jesus Christ. This plan is revealed all the way back in the garden of Eden when God said that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. This was a prophecy from God about the great plan of God's salvation through his Son Jesus Christ.

We can see this salvation prophesied in the lives of the prophets. There were many pictures of salvation. Consider the story of Abraham and Isaac. Think about how God asked him to sacrifice his only son of promise, Isaac, and how Abraham reasoned that God would raise him from the dead. (**Hebrews 11:19**). This is pictured in the ordinance of baptism. (**1 Peter 3:18**).

Some of the clearest prophecies of salvation through Jesus Christ were in Isaiah. In Isaiah 53 we see a description of the Lord Jesus on the cross in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Unfortunately many teach that when a person becomes a Christian that it is a step towards self improvement or living a good life. It is true that being a Christian is a good life, but not in the same way the world understands goodness. The Christian life includes hardship, sorrow, temptation, and trials. The Lord allows problems and challenges in the life of a Christian for the purpose of purifying our faith so we may bring glory to God. Our lives bring glory to God when we endure hardship like the prophet Job.

We often do not see reasons to rejoice when hardships confront us. However, Peter said we can rejoice because this is the material God uses to make us complete in our faith. We do not need to be afraid of hard times because God is still in control. The Lord is on the throne and he will not allow us to be tempted above that which we can bear. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

Finally, we can rest in the fact that our salvation is secure by God. Each day when we wake up and look up to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith we are secure in our salvation. Each day when our heart is fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ we are secure in our salvation. We do not need to fear anything in this world could separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are secure in our salvation because salvation is the work of Christ and the work was completed at Calvary. We can rest in the work Jesus Christ did for us.

We enter this rest by faith in the Lord Jesus. We enter by faith and we continue by faith in Christ. We are rooted and built up in Jesus. Those who turn aside to religious systems along with faith in Christ fall from grace. We can only continue as long as we continue only with Jesus. If we have Jesus we have everything and all we need for life and godliness.

1 Peter 1:13-16

God's people are called to be holy. What does this mean? What does holiness mean?

I think we can at least assume that this means we should be serious about clean living. We can assume at the least we should not be living in sexual immorality, drunkenness, or living recklessly.

Holy living will take focus, concentration, and serious thinking. We are encouraged in the Bible to bring our thoughts under control. We should recognize patterns of thinking that contradict God's word. Recognize the pattern of lies and tear it down.

It is amazing how strenuous this process can be, but if you ask the Lord for help I guarantee he will place you in circumstances which will bring unbiblical patterns of thinking out in the open. The Lord exposes it and then we need to deal with it by humbling ourselves, confessing we are wrong and God is right. God is always right. The Bible is always true and right. If what we think or society and culture thinks in any way contradicts the Bible then the Bible is right and we are wrong. There is plenty of wrong right now with the way Americans think. Our country is on a fast track to complete Bible ignorance and rebellion against God in every aspect.

Perhaps this is why the Lord wants me to write these Bible lessons. I am taking apart the Bible in small bits to chew on it and process it. We should learn what God expects of us. God made us and that means he owns us: body, soul, and spirit. We are God's. Our body and mind do not belong to us; it was given to us by God. Everything we have and everything we are belongs to God. God has every right to demand that we live holy lives.

Since there is so much confusion surrounding holiness in the Christian life it is a good idea to attempt to define what "holiness" is NOT.

Holiness is not wearing a dress, a covering, or not wearing make up. This is NOT holiness. Holiness is not staying away from the TV, the Internet, or movies. Holiness is not staying away from unbelievers or heathen people. Holiness is not trusting in our good works to please God.

What is holiness then? To understand what holiness is we need to look at Jesus. He didn't just stay away from sin but he overcame the sin in this world by living a life of such goodness he could not be touched by it.

Holiness is knowing God is a real person and that his eyes are on me at all times. With this knowledge my life will automatically be clean, pure, and morally upright.

Holiness is loving the Lord with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is impossible unless I am completely filled with the Holy Spirit. We can only be holy if the Holy Spirit is living and abiding in us. We cannot be holy in our strength or willpower.

Holiness is a result of fixing our spiritual eyes on Jesus every day. Holiness comes as we gaze on the Lord Jesus Christ and on his finished, completed work on Calvary. As we behold the Lamb of God we are transformed from glory to glory and from strength to strength.

Our lives are not changed by actions so much as by looking on the Lord Jesus. We are transformed from the inside out by the inner working of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God on our spirit. We are born again in our spirit by the Holy Spirit, and then he teaches us how messed up our opinions and beliefs are. He straightens out all the foul attitudes and patterns of speech, thinking, and behavior.

Be holy! This is a command and our goal. We are not allowed to relax in the attainment of this goal at any time. We cannot become holy in isolation. We need brothers and sisters in Christ to sharpen us. As iron sharpens iron so one brother sharpens another. We need fellowship, prayer, God's word, and we need to find a way to use the talents God gave us to help build the kingdom of God.

1 Peter 1:17

There is a continuous remembrance throughout the Bible that God's chosen people are on a journey and it is from birth to death and to resurrection. This current world system is not our home, but we are only here temporarily. We are passing through this current world on our way to the true destination. Our true home lies in eternity with God and the Lord Jesus.

This trip can be called a sojourn. We are sojourning through this life, like pilgrims passing through on our way to another place. We are only temporary residents in this world.

Those who have spiritual eyes to see God's Kingdom instinctively understand and grasp how temporary this life is and their heart is not set on this temporary world. What can be seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal. However, with eyes of faith we can see into this eternal kingdom and we get glimpses of it that produce within us a longing desire. The desire for the eternal kingdom drives us on to endure our temporary hardships and tribulations here on this earth.

Peter described our sojourning as one who travels with fear. What does the word fear mean in the context of what Peter described here? I need to make it plain this fear was not the kind which harms us, torments us, or causes us to want to run. Actually, this is the kind of fear which causes us to run toward the one who inspires it. His fear produces a desire to experience more of who He is, more of His presence, more of the revelation and the knowledge of His person.

I've experienced this fear in some small way in my sojourn, and I must say it is one of the greatest blessings a Christian can ever have in their relationship with the Lord. To experience the fear of the Lord is to experience the presence of God in truth. It goes beyond emotional ecstasy to an experience of God as a real Person who knows me, who senses me, who is watching me, who is evaluating my thoughts, reactions, words, goals, motives, everything!

To sojourn in the fear of God is to live a life of freedom from guile, hypocrisy, delusion, deception, lies, and compromise. It is a wonderful life to experience. It is pure and clean and fills my heart with great longing for my future inheritance in God's kingdom.

A man cannot truly know the Lord without having a fear of Him. One cannot encounter the God who speaks out of the burning bush and not experience a fear that causes you to immediately fall on your face because the ground you stand on is holy ground.

This is the God of truth who made Isaiah cry out in fear with the realization that he was a man of unclean lips and lived among a people of unclean lips.

This is the God who made the prophet Daniel fall down and pass out when he saw just a glimpse of his future dealings with mankind.

This is the God who punishes nations for their sins, and who forgives our sins when we humble ourselves.

He is the God who opposes and resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

The fear of the Lord is clean and pure and it brings revival to the spirit of man. To experience the fear of God is to know something of eternity in the present temporary reality.

Once a man experiences the fear of God he will sojourn differently. He no longer travels the path of this life carelessly. He considers how he lives, what he says, his attitudes, and he measures everything in his life by the unchanging truth of the Word of God.

Let us live our life with our heart set on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us speak of it often, if only to our own heart, and remember that this life is temporary. We have not even begun to live our true life yet. The best is yet to come.

1 Peter 1:18-19

The word "redeem" is similar to the idea of "ransom" in our modern English in that it carries the idea of someone who violently taken, or kidnapped, and now offered for ransom money. This is a mental picture that suits the idea of "redeemed" we are looking at in this verse.

To redeem means to buy back, or repurchase. It implies that the owner is purchasing something he already had in his possession.

This is an accurate way to think of our relationship with God. He owns us in the sense that he created us. To create something one automatically owns what is made. God automatically owns us because he made us.

God gave man free choice and the opportunity to choose another owner. God displayed his love and provision and protection, and yet man still chose to go with another owner. Instead of living for God man now lives for Self. We have been brought under the bondage of Self. This is the result of partaking of the Tree Of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We now are separated from God and our life in this reality is one long road of being chained to and caring for and providing for and protecting Self.

Living for self is a miserable existence. The results of living for self is that our bodies are under the law of sin and death, we are separated from God, and are now living according to the same principle as Satan. We became one in principle and essence with the Serpent when we fell in the garden of Eden.

The Lord Jesus redeemed us from this fallen condition when he died in our place on Calvary. After he died, he was buried, and then he rose again from the dead on the third day. When we renounce Self and put our faith in Christ Jesus we become participants in his death, burial, and resurrection. We become a new creation in Christ Jesus. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

We were redeemed. Jesus purchased us even though he owned us from the beginning.

Notice the point Peter made here is that we were not purchased with money. God did not buy us back with silver and gold.

Instead, he purchased us with the most valuable thing in the universe, and that was the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ. Peter made the comparison that Christ's blood is like the blood of the lamb the Jewish people poured out to cover their sins.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who redeemed us back to God with his own blood. He exchanged his life for ours and now we are free to live for God. We can now have a relationship with God once again through our Lord Jesus Christ. We were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

1 Peter 1:20-21

Jesus pointed his disciples to the heavenly Father. He made it plain everything he did and said was the result of seeing what his Father did and hearing what his Father said. Jesus was united and in perfect step with the heavenly Father. When the disciples asked about prayer he said: "Our Father who art in heaven".

Jesus pointed us to the Father.

After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus Christ, through whom we now believe and hope in God.

Peter told us plainly that Jesus pointed us to God. Of course, we know Jesus is God. God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is eternally the three in one God. In different dispensations of reality God revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He also revealed himself as Prophet, Priest, and King. These roles parallel Israel, church, and the kingdom. All three are one.

Our faith and hope is in God the Father because he raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The greatest demonstration of who God is and his glory is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The plan for Jesus to die on a cross and be raised from the dead was settled in eternity past. It was a series of events and accomplishments destined in eternity to take place in time and space by God. God accepted men like Abraham on the basis of their faith because in eternity the Lamb of God accomplished the work of redemption. These facts must be grasped by faith and not by intellectual processing.

What God decided to do in eternity in raising Jesus from the dead happened at a specific time in history. It was an actual event which took place. Jesus had a small handful of men and women who followed him and they witnessed his death, burial, and resurrection. Their testimony of the historical facts turned the world upside down and split time in half. It changed the way history was recorded and even determined the date printed on a newspaper today.

Only God could make this impact on time and history. God manifest himself in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "*Have faith in God.*" (**Mark 11:22**).

Mankind attempts to make faith an end in itself. Faith is not a power in itself. Faith must have an object. If this object is anything other than God himself revealed by the Lord Jesus and the Bible then it is idolatry. Faith in objects or "gods of our own understanding" is idol worship and false religion.

Only faith in God as revealed through the Lord Jesus matters. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (**John 14:6**). We cannot have God without Jesus. We can never know the Father unless we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is the revelation of God for us. He is the express image and revelation of God to mankind. (**2 Corinthians 4:4**).

Today people who do not believe in God or Jesus still exercise faith. Instead of putting faith in God and Jesus they instead put faith in themselves.

This faith in self will fail. It is pride which causes men to put faith in themselves. They may achieve much within the framework of the current world system, but none of what is in this current system of life will remain. It is temporary and transient.

This current world system is passing away and will soon be gone (**1 John 2:17**). The only thing that will remain is God, God's word, and our souls.

Our souls continue living in one fashion or another. A soul which did not have faith in Jesus and God in life will be separated from God forever after physical death. This separation leads this condemned soul to being cast into the lake of fire at the final judgment of God. (**Revelation 20:15**).

My prayer is that everyone who reads or hears these comments will renounce faith in self, and they will turn to Jesus with all of their heart. I pray each person will put their faith in God.

1 Peter 1:22

Agape is a word which describes the kind of love Jesus demonstrated when he prayed on the cross "*Forgive them for they know not what they do.*" This was a love for his enemies and for those who hung him on the cross and mocked him.

What kind of love is this? It is unconditional love. It is beyond human emotion and enters the realm of divine willpower. To be capable of forgiveness and love toward enemies like this is a supernatural power from heaven. Earthly man is not capable of this noble characteristic unless empowered from heaven.

Only a soul cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ can love the way Jesus loved. A soul who has experienced God's love and forgiveness and has been infused with the Holy Spirit is in a position to love others unconditionally.

This is love without any strings attached and with no other motive than a choice for God's glory and the highest good.

Why is it that only a pure soul can love like this? A lesser soul, one that is polluted by sin and selfishness is incapable of this because of the effect of sin. Sin always makes a man selfish and complicated and hypocritical.

A pure soul, however, is capable of a love like Jesus demonstrated.

Our souls are purified through obedience to the Spirit and result in a sincere, unconditional regard, this agape love if you will, that comes from heaven. Peter exhorted the brothers to love one another with agape love.

Then he exhorted them not only to this love which comes from a pure soul and heart but also to express this love in a fervent manner.

Fervency does not waste time and is efficient in achieving its purpose. We are to love people sincerely and also quickly look for ways to express God's love in practical ways which will demonstrate most effectively God's love.

Many times this will mean we ourselves will endure hardship, humility, and suffering. So be it. This is the example before us in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:23-25

In **John chapter 3** Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again it was in the context of the Holy Spirit. Here Peter puts being born again in the context of the word of God.

A comparison is made between our temporary earthly lives and the eternal word of God. The word of God lives and abides forever. When we receive God's word into our hearts we are born again.

It is important to grasp and meditate on the brevity of our earthly lives. The importance of understanding this truth is so we will not waste the short life we have but will invest it into what really matters in eternity. Peter said here the word of the Lord endures forever. By the word of the Lord we heard the gospel preached to us and it is through hearing and believing God's word we are born again.

This word is active and alive. It gives us life. Jesus said the words he spoke are spirit and life. Hearing and believing the word of the Lord gives us eternal life and we live forever.

The work of God is this: to believe in the one whom he sent. Jesus was sent into this world to give us the truth about the Father. He is the word of God in flesh to us, and when we believe in Him we are born again. We receive eternal life by believing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. (**John 20:31**).

Jesus said he came to give us life and life more abundantly. It is through his word and the Holy Spirit we are born again. The Holy Spirit applies the word of God to us. The word and the Spirit live in us, giving us new life, and making us into a new creation. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Peter may have been thinking about **Psalm 90** when he compared our life to a blade of grass. It is like a blade of grass that grows up in the morning and by the evening it is dry and withered. (**Psalm 90:5-6**).

Listen to this exhortation and meditate on our brief life. Let us apply our hearts to the wisdom of God's word. Let us believe in the words of Jesus and receive the life that lasts forever.

1 Peter Chapter 2

1 Peter 2:1

I've heard people say you can come to Jesus just like you are. God loves you just like you are. People, however, instinctively know this is a bait and switch and it is. It is true God loves you, however, his love will not allow you to remain the way you are. It is not God's goal to leave you in the moral state you are in when you are saved.

I'd prefer not to tell people to come as they are. Instead, tell them they will change. God will do the work in them to will and to do according to his good purpose.

Getting ourselves together first and then coming to God cannot and will not happen, and it is just an excuse not to submit to the righteousness of Christ. People know that a change is required but try to do it on their own before they will pray and ask for God's help. This is trying to be saved in a backwards fashion. Once we are saved then we can set our heart on the Lord Jesus and we will change. We are changed by beholding the Lamb of God. When we look at Jesus we will be changed from glory to glory and from strength to strength.

Immediately after Peter talked about being born again by the word of God he exhorts the born again Christian to lay aside the behavior of unbelievers. These negative traits hinder spiritual growth: malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speakings. These traits are cultivated in someone who is an idolater whose heart is consecrated to self, providing for self, and protecting self.

The Lord is our provider and our protector. Our work as a Christian is to be an ambassador of Christ. We are salt and light in the world. The Lord will supply our needs and protect us as we serve him in the world.

As a result, malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, slander – none of these traits are needed to live in this new life. They are weapons the unbeliever uses to survive in the world system and are no longer needed by the born again Christian.

Instead of malice we love our enemies. Instead of guile we are sincere and straightforward. Instead of hypocrisy our lives are filled with humility and honesty. Instead of envy we are glad when someone else does well and is blessed. Instead of slandering we now give thanks for people and pray for them.

How do we lay these things aside? First, by recognizing if we have a problem with these items. This requires the light of God's word and the correction of the Holy Spirit. If we are unwilling to study the Word and unwilling to listen to correction we will not make progress in our spiritual walk with Jesus.

We should be willing to humble ourselves and ask the Lord to correct us, rebuke us, and get our heart in a position where we are willing to be changed by God's power and grace.

Some people do not believe they can change, but a born again Christian can definitely change from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered and others-centered life. It takes more time for some than others but we can all start today by requesting God's help and having a willingness to change.

1 Peter 2:2-3

Peter was not literally describing the Christians he wrote to as babies. He's not rebuking them for being young Christians.

Instead, he used the word picture of a baby drinking milk to show us how a Christian is to yearn for spiritual nourishment from the Lord. Continuing with this word picture he said "if you have tasted the Lord is gracious". The "if" here does not imply they would say the Lord is not gracious but instead means "since you know how good the Lord is, how good it tastes to receive spiritual nourishment from the Lord".

Does Peter have the Psalms in the back of his mind when he is writing his letter? (**Psalms 34:8**).

The idea of Jesus as spiritual food is all through the New Testament and is taught by the Lord Jesus also. He told his followers he was the bread of life and he was living waters. He taught people he would give them water so they would never thirst again. He told his disciples at the last supper they would eat his flesh and drink his blood.

This was doctrine in word pictures and not doctrine in literal terms. Some people try to interpret this literally so when we take communion we eat the body of Christ all over again and make it into a ritual to earn salvation.

Jesus said the words he spoke were spirit and life. When we commune with Christ in prayer and through the study of his word we enjoy spiritual food and drink. It is more than mouthing a prayer, more than forcing ourselves to read a chapter in the Bible every day. There is real communion with the Lord and touching the Lord through these activities in which our spirit is fed and refreshed.

Let us taste and see the Lord is good. Let us draw near to God like a baby draws near to the mother for milk. This is how close the Lord is to us. We can draw near to God and He draws near to us. He feeds our spirit with the bread of life and satisfies our thirsty soul with the living waters.

1 Peter 2:4-8

Peter quoted scripture from the Old Testament (**Psalm 118:22-23**) that pointed to the arrival of the Messiah, and this scripture the Lord Jesus himself also quoted as fulfillment of prophecy about himself. (**Matthew 21:42**).

Jesus is the foundation stone and we are living stones in a spiritual temple created by God. In this temple we are all priests and offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. This tells me that Christians do not need any human mediator between themselves and God. We have direct access to God through Jesus Christ and can be confident when we approach the throne of God's grace. (**Hebrews 4:16**).

Also, these scriptures reveal the Lord is in the process of building his temple. Paul compared the church to a body, and he also said that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. (**1 Corinthians 6:19**). The church is the body of Christ (**Ephesians 5:30**), which is a temple.

These scriptures prophesied that people who would not believe in the Messiah when he came and instead the Messiah would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. For those who believed in the Messiah this corner stone was precious. Those who believe become one with him. As he is a stone they also become living stones built together into a holy temple for the Lord.

It stands out to me how believers are made into the same material as the Lord. Here he was called a stone and those who believe in him are living stones. When we believe in the Lord we are truly united together with him and changed into his image and likeness. (**Romans 8:29**). This is all the work of God in us to believe and trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since it is God's work (**Ephesians 2:4-6**), we can have confidence that our relationship to him and eternal life is secure in his hands. (**John 10:29**). We can trust in him, and not be afraid. (**Psalm 56:3**).

1 Peter 2:9-10

Peter brought in more Old Testament scripture. Read **Hosea 1:10**. Paul quoted this same passage in his letter to the Romans. Read **Romans 9:25-26**.

The prophecy in Hosea pointed to the mystery of the church in which God joined the Jew and Gentile into one house of faith. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead he created something new which did not exist before.

He created the church, which consisted of Jews and Gentiles together. Read **Ephesians 2:11-14**.

Though it may be true Jesus primarily reached out to Jewish people when he was on earth he also ministered to Gentile people. Often he would go out of his way to minister to a Gentile as he did with the demoniac in the Gadarenes. Not only that but often Jesus would exclaim in amazement to his Jewish audience at the faith of Gentiles who came to him. He provoked the Jewish people by the faith

of Gentiles who came to him. This idea of provocation is picked up by Paul in his letter to the **Romans in 10:19-21**.

This church comprised of Jews and Gentiles in one body makes a peculiar people. For 2,000 years theologians have tried to figure out where being a Jew ends and where being a Christian starts or how to combine the two together or keep them separate. Some attempt to say there is no more Jew today but the church replaced the Jews. But this is clearly not the case because the apostles stated there is still a future fulfillment of prophecy for the nation of Israel.

The Lord helped me understand this through a vision I had on August 4 and 8, 2014. The Lord filled me with his Holy Spirit and told me to study the phrase "*hidden manna*" in the Bible.

As a result of Bible study and this vision I could see that God's people are one. Just like God is three in one so the people of God are three in one: Israel, church, and the kingdom. There are three people who are made into one people. We have seen Israel and the church and soon we will see the kingdom during the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

We are a peculiar people chosen and set apart by God himself. The Lord called each one of us by name and we heard his voice. We are expected to obey the voice of the Lord when he speaks to us. We are expected to fulfill God's gift and calling on our lives. Each of us has a purpose and responsibility to help build this spiritual temple. Like we read earlier in this chapter we are all living stones built together.

It is interesting how Peter kept telling them who they were. He doesn't tell them who they need to become; he told them who they were. This is true revelation from heaven: to know who you are in Christ and where you fit together in this holy temple of the Lord.

1 Peter 2:11-12

The old English word "*conversation*" used in this verse has a different meaning in modern English. Today "*conversation*" means to talk with someone. However, in the context of the King James Bible this word was used to mean a "*manner of living*". It means the way a man lived or his lifestyle. To paraphrase the above verse we could say "*having your manner of life honest among the Gentiles*".

Our lifestyle is to be in agreement with God's truth and therefore reflect honesty and truthfulness. We speak the truth in love, we are transparent, simple, straight forward, and sincere. Our words and lifestyle do not contain double meanings or hidden meanings but are plain and simple.

The result of living in this manner is when people accuse us of wrong doing our manner of living will testify on our behalf. If we have in the past lived a double life or men can see hypocrisy between our profession of faith and manner of living then these accusations will carry weight. Our best defense against the accusations of unbelievers is to live an exemplary life of truth and love.

Peter taught that this lifestyle is not passive but rather filled with good works which can easily be seen by anyone.

Of course, men who are determined to paint Christians in a bad light will see evil no matter what we do. Society today calls what is evil good and what is good evil. This development was foretold in scripture for how society would structure itself toward the end of the age.

However, if we follow Peter's admonition we can deflect some of the attacks of unbelievers. By living transparent lives free from hypocrisy and clinging to truth we can avoid some attacks or at least be acquitted of false charges if it comes to that.

When Peter speaks of unbelievers glorifying God I don't think he means they were going to raise their hands and say "hallelujah"!

I think what he meant was that they would acknowledge we are followers of God, even if to them this is despicable. They would not be able to deny we are children of God but would be forced to admit we are truly followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way the heathen bring glory to God by their admission of our consistent living and profession of faith in Christ.

Peter exhorted us to abstain from fleshly lusts. There is a part we must take in cooperating with the Holy Spirit to avoid temptation, and in denying the lust of the flesh. We need to make changes in our lifestyle which will help us stay away from stimulus in the world system. There are people, places, and things we need to steer clear of if we hope to live a clean life.

Fleshly lusts, if given into, will wage war against our soul. Sin will make a man's soul double-minded. A Christian has a profession of faith in God. To live contrary to this profession will produce unbelief, confusion, and pain within our soul and spirit, not to mention the effect inconsistency has on brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let us live in such a way that our words and actions agree with one another, and then we can enjoy peace of mind and heart.

1 Peter 2:13-17

Submission to government and the authority of man-made government structures was encouraged by Peter and Paul. Jesus told his followers to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

Submission to authority is a biblical principle that needs context. During the time when Peter and Paul encouraged Christians to respect authority they were suffering at the hands of these governments. Christians were actively persecuted by the government at that time. These Christians were taught by the apostles to guard themselves against having an attitude of rebellion against government.

Peter showed us the purpose of government. The purpose of government is to punish evildoers and to reward those who do well. Peter taught Christians to do well and show honor and respect toward government. As a result of showing respect the government should reward Christians. I say "should" because this is the hope of a best case scenario with an anti-Christian government. We shall see in later passages in this letter Peter said if they suffer for well doing that was preferable and more honoring to God than suffering for rebellious attitudes and actions.

The goal was to teach Christians to live peacefully within the world system so we can have an opportunity to share the gospel. The goal is the spread of the gospel and this should be easier when we live in peace with government and with our neighbor.

Another reason to show respect to authority is to disprove those who accuse Christians of subversion. The accusation the religious leaders used in front of Pilate was that Jesus subverted the Roman government by claiming to be a king. The devil tries to inspire unbelievers to accuse Christians of subversion. To deflect such accusations Christians should go the extra mile in showing respect to government.

Christian leaders who oppose abortion aggressively justify protests with verses such as "*It is better to obey God rather than man*". The apostles said this when they spoke to the religious leaders and not to secular government.

Perhaps there are times we should obey God rather than human government, but I want to remember the context in which Peter and Paul lived. The Roman government was as anti-Christian and pagan as you could possibly get and the apostles did not organize political protests.

When they said they would "obey God rather than man" the context was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The religious leaders commanded them to stop preaching in Jesus' name. Instead, the apostles obeyed the Lord's command and not the religious leaders. As Christians we are the servants of God and the best way to communicate this is to show the same attitude Jesus Christ had. He gave us an example of humility and submission, and was obedient to his heavenly Father even when that meant dying on a cross.

1 Peter 2:18-23

Peter exhorted Christians tempted to be rebellious while suffering under government. He covered the authority structure of secular government and now put his finger on relationships closer to home.

The parallel of this servant relationship in the modern world would be employer and employee. During Peter's time he spoke directly to Christians who were slaves. They may or may not have received compensation for their work but were servants.

Peter taught a humble attitude toward authority whether the authority is secular civic authority or more personal in the work place and on the job. The attitude which Peter taught was the same attitude he observed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the record of how Jesus washed Peter's feet? Jesus took the role of a slave and a servant. Jesus humbled himself.

The American attitude of demanding rights and standing up is the opposite of the example of Jesus and is also the opposite of what Peter taught in this letter.

We are called to humble ourselves in circumstances which are unpleasant even when people over us in authority in the workplace are unjust or unfair. We are called to humble ourselves and bear this suffering. Peter said if we take it patiently then this is acceptable with God.

Don't we want to be acceptable with God? Don't we want to please God in our daily life situations? God is at work in us to make us into the image of his Son Jesus. The purpose of this process is so that our lives will bring glory to the heavenly Father.

1 Peter 2:24-25

It is easy to limit these verses to only talking about spiritual healing. By doing so we never have to stress about hoping our bodies can be healed. We know with God all things are possible but we don't have to stretch ourselves to believe God can heal us today if by these verses all that is implied is spiritual healing.

Don't get me wrong. Spiritual healing, the forgiveness of our sins, is more important in the long run than physical healing.

However, consider the life and ministry of Jesus for a moment in the background of what Peter taught. Did Jesus only forgive the sins of people? He asked the question once "which is easier, to forgive sins or to heal"?

Jesus treats the whole man and not just the spiritual. He healed the sick man's body as well as the sinful man's soul. He is able to do it all. So the question arises in my mind: why would Bible teachers insist this scripture is only speaking of healing of our sins? Definitely he is talking about sins here. He draws the picture that we are sheep going astray. Sheep going astray is often a picture of a sinner. Also, he said that Jesus bore our sins in his own body in the tree.

For me it is plain that Jesus wants to heal the body as well as the soul. Of course we do not understand why one man receives healing from the Lord and others continue to languish. Only God knows why some people are healed and other people are not healed.

I firmly believe we should always pray and ask God for physical healing as well as spiritual forgiveness of sins. Many times these issues overlap and are intertwined. Jesus healed a man and then told him not to sin anymore or something worse would happen to him. He also made it clear in the case of the blind man he healed that sickness was not a direct result of this man's sins or his parent's sins. Jesus also in one instance forgave a man his sins and healed him too.

Don't put limits on what Christ accomplished through his finished work on Calvary. What Jesus did for us is, of course, most importantly the forgiveness of sins so we can receive eternal life. However, let us also believe God to heal our mortal bodies and restore us to health according to his wisdom and prudence.

1 Peter Chapter 3

1 Peter 3:1-6

Peter continued with the theme of submission. So far we see Peter taught submission to government and employers. Now he taught submission within the home and began with the wife.

Today people rail against the idea of submission of a wife to her husband. But I'd like to make it plain: our society has it wrong. Our society calls what is good evil and what is evil good. Society has

everything upside down and inside out. Do not trust the ideas promoted today: they are against God for the most part especially when it comes to defining relationships and marriage.

One reason given for the wife's submission is to benefit the husband. If the husband is unbelieving then a wife's submission is the greatest method in bringing him to faith. Remember humility and submission are recommended in the workplace and towards government. The greatest method to reach anyone for Christ is humility and submission. Why do we think we can invent a better method for reaching people than the example Jesus gave to us?

Peter encouraged wives to put the emphasis for beauty on the inward adorning of good character. Women naturally are concerned with their beauty. This is how God created women to be concerned with their beauty. Peter encouraged wives to direct this natural desire in a spiritual direction. Christian wives should focus on developing a beautiful spirit and qualities which Jesus displayed in his life. A meek and gentle spirit. Jesus said he was meek and lowly in heart. This is the example set before us.

1 Peter 3:7

A husband is a spiritual leader and should be constantly praying for his wife. In order for his prayers to be effective he must live a practical life of love toward his wife.

This practical love is shown when the husband understands his wife and lives together with her in accordance with this knowledge. He honors her so even though she may be in submission she does not feel less of a person in this relationship. They are spiritually equal but different in roles. He is to look for ways to honor his wife and show his understanding of her.

To understand his wife he studies her to be able to support, protect, and make her secure. This is what the husband is called to do. Even as Christ loved the church, his body, so also husbands are to love their wives.

When Peter called the wife the weaker vessel he did not say she was less of a person. This meant generally the wife is weaker physically and the husband should always be sensitive to this and look for ways to alleviate physical burdens.

Not only are they husband and wife, but are also brother and sister in Christ. They are both heirs together of the wonderful gift of eternal life. As being heirs together their relationship is one which reflects eternity and is a witness to the world of God's love and mercy shown through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Husbands are to be spiritual leaders and priests of their homes. They should initiate times of prayer and Bible study in the home. He is to encourage his wife in her faith while not being overbearing.

We are to exhort one another daily as long as it is called Today. We are to help one another serve Jesus.

1 Peter 3:8-12

After addressing Christians in regard to submission to secular government, the workplace, and the family, Peter now turned his attention to Christians relating to one another within the church.

The first exhortation was toward unity of mind. Having one mind was something the apostle Paul taught in **Philippians 4:2** when he asked Euodias and Syntyche to have the same mind. Our mind is to be the mind of Christ Jesus! (**Philippians 2:2,5**).

This unity is described in **Acts chapter 2** when the disciples gathered together in Jerusalem to wait to be filled with power from on high.

Jesus also prayed about unity in **John chapter 17**.

This topic of unity in the church is important to our purpose, mission, and God's plan of salvation. Jesus said the world would know him by the love Christians show to one another.

Peter taught Christians not to argue or fight with other Christians. We are not to seek justice or revenge against another Christian. These instructions not only apply to our relationships with Christians but also with unbelievers. We are not to fight people or get revenge. We are not to return evil for evil. (**Romans 12:21**). Jesus taught us to love our enemies so how much more should we love our Christian family.

Scripture assures us if we live with peace toward other men we will experience a longer, extended life. Peter quoted **Psalms 34:12-15** in this passage as his text and these promises are for all time.

The question remains: Do we desire life and many good days? Do we want to see good in our lives? Then we must depart from evil, do good, seek peace. The Lord hears our prayers, but the Lord is against those who do evil and will cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

These are exceeding great and precious promises which we can rely on. These are exhortations for us to live godly lives of humility and peace. The promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 3:13-18

Regardless of whether or not a man is a Christian we will all suffer in this life. If it is necessary and inevitable that we suffer why not suffer for doing what is good? Why suffer for doing evil?

Yesterday I saw in the news that an upcoming famous football player was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole. This man was only in his twenties. He had not even gotten to the age of thirty yet and his life is over. There is no more hope for him. He will suffer the rest of his life for the crime of murder. The way of the transgressor is hard.

Yet it is also difficult for the Christian to live in this world system. Jesus told his followers plainly they would suffer. We see the example of Paul suffering for the gospel throughout his ministry and he spoke of this often in his letters. (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

Peter asked the question: Who would harm you if you do what is right? And yet he immediately conceded this is exactly what happens. It happened to the Lord Jesus. It happened to all of the early church and Christians. It happens today all over the world where Christians are murdered for their faith in Jesus.

In situations where we are called to suffer we find there is a silver lining. In that the situation we have an opportunity to share our testimony even to those persecute us. I remember the testimony of Richard

Wurmbrand who suffered as a Christian under the communists after World War 2. He was in prison for many years because of his faith and Christian ministry. As a result, he had many opportunities to witness to his persecutors. He described the supernatural love from God that can and does fill the heart of Christians when they suffer. God enabled them to forgive and to love their enemies.

Christ Jesus is our example of suffering. If the Lord did not attempt to escape the path of suffering why are we so quick to think we will not face suffering? Suffering does not mean that you are less of a Christian or that something is wrong with your faith. Many times, in fact, it means the opposite, that God is testing your faith so that it can grow and bring honor and glory to the Name of Jesus.

1 Peter Chapter 4

1 Peter 4:1-6

The fact Jesus suffered for us gives us the strength to also suffer. Are we better than Jesus? No, the Lord was perfect and sinless, and yet suffered. We can expect to face suffering. Christians who expect an easy life are not prepared to endure when hardship comes. It is inevitable hardship arrives, and when it does we must be ready. Endurance is inspired by our attitude and that must rest on the finished work of Christ to be successful. Endurance to the end is assured, not by willpower, but by the accomplishment of Jesus in time and in eternity.

When Peter said "*he who hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*" he means it. There is an end to the work of sin's power in the life of the believer. From the perspective of eternity sin lost its power in the life of the believer. This can be experienced as we maintain a consistent faith on the facts of Christ's work. When we rest in Christ's work we are free from our own work. Christ was at rest in His father's work and so he did not observe the religious Sabbath of the Jews. He did not have to. He was Lord of the Sabbath. In the same way, we are free from religion by resting in Christ alone. I no longer observe any seven day ordinances or rules because Christ is my ordinance and my law. Christ alone is all I need and He is all that is necessary.

I no longer live for my own will but for the will of God. In the past I lived for myself but now I live for God through faith in Christ Jesus. Peter listed the manifestation of self worship. It is a life filled with "*lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*", and this is now behind us as believers. We no longer live like this because we are changed by the Lord Jesus. This lifestyle no longer attracts us. Unbelievers cannot understand why we no longer engage in this activity. Our lives no longer produce this fruit. It frustrates them and alarms them that we now produce righteousness, holiness, and peace. Our lives are a rebuke to them and they hate us for it.

How do they get back at us for living a holy life? They call what is good evil and what is evil good. They change darkness for light and light for darkness. They turn everything upside down and inside out.

When I say the world is turned inside out and upside down I mean this literally. We live in a system organized by an enemy. It is a copy and counterfeit of the real thing. The real thing is who God is. The world system is generally outlined as government, business, and society. These three areas are the inverted roles of the prophet, priest, and the king. The apostle John showed us the spiritual

manifestation of the world system in **1 John 2** as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I believe the spiritual symptoms also parallel the inverted roles.

People in the world do not comprehend why we do not run with them in their excess and indulgence of the sinful nature. After all, they are only doing what comes natural. That is the point exactly. A Christian is not just a natural man anymore. Yes, we are men. But we are also participants of the divine nature through faith in Jesus and are no longer desirous of the downward pull of sin and death. The law of sin and death may still attempt to exert itself through the members of the physical body, but our spirit yearns for heaven and to be free from all corrupting influences of the devil, the world system, and the carnal nature. We long to be swallowed up in a glorified body so we can reflect the light of Jesus and dwell together with God in eternity.

1 Peter 4:7

What a strange thing to say 2,000 years ago: "*the end of all things is at hand*".

What was Peter talking about? Why did he say the end of all things is near? Obviously, the world has continued to go on for two thousand years after Peter made this statement.

Peter meant what he said and I believe what Peter said is absolutely the inspired Word of God.

The problem is we do not comprehend time like God. When Peter wrote that the end of all things is near he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To God this is true: the end of all things is near. God tries in every generation to make us realize the world is passing away. This world has only so many days before it is gone. (**Psalm 90:4**).

The Lord does not measure time like us. Time was created by the Lord Jesus. It is not something he is subject to. This is a mystery but all history and the future has happened in God's mind. God knows everything as far back as time goes and as far in the future as time goes. God is all knowing.

Let's rest in the fact 2,000 years ago Peter said the end of all things is near and this is getting closer to fulfillment every second.

I am thankful as a Christian I have hope during times of change. I have an anchor for my soul. This anchor is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus never changes. Time changes everything except Jesus. He is the same loving Savior, the same King of kings and Lord of lords he always was. His promises in the Bible do not change.

We are to be clear minded and self controlled so we can pray. When the world is falling apart we maintain our wits and control ourselves. This is easier said than done.

Can I overcome fear and anxiety? This is what Peter is talking about! Be clear minded and self controlled so I can pray. Peter tells me to be clear minded and self controlled so I can pray. I need to communicate and talk to Jesus during this time when the world falls apart. Why?

What about the preparations people make for the end? I think preparations are good. I think it is common sense. It is prudence to prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

However, no matter how much provision we make in the time of a disaster it is the Lord we must look to for help. There is no guarantee all the provisions we make will help us when the time comes.

What if somebody comes to my door with a shotgun and demands my dry foods? What will I do then about all the provisions I made?

I think it is good to prepare for what might happen. It is no guarantee it will help.

Our help is in the name of the Lord! (**Psalm 5:11-12**)

It will be people who pray who will survive in the crisis. When the foundations of the world shake, it is the righteous who will be surrounded by God's protection and taken care of by his provision.

During the three years of drought in Israel during Elijah's time God took care of him; fed him meat by having birds bring it to him. God miraculously supplied water and food and took care of Elijah's needs.

Didn't God warn Noah about a flood that was coming and gave him directions on how to build an ark?

Did God shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den over night?

God is able to take care of his children. He promised he would do this. The question is not will God take care of us when the end of all things comes but are we ready to live by faith and pray when the end of all things comes?

The end of all things is coming whether we like it or not. It may not be tomorrow that the end of the world comes. But it is a fact that the end is coming.

Are you ready?

Are you ready to stand before God and give an account for your life? Have you asked Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior and forgive all your sins. That is the best thing you can do to prepare for the end. Get spiritually prepared by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and learn how to serve him until He comes.

1 Peter 4:8-11

There is fervent passion in the love Christians have for one another. It is a fervency which exudes so much heat the world is warmed by it. Unbelievers see the smoke of its burning ascend. They know we are Christians by our love for one another.

Showing hospitality is the art of dropping everything one thinks is important in order to serve someone else. It is allowing someone to come into your house and into your heart. You are willing to sit with this person and listen to them and hear their story. They have a story to tell and we should listen carefully and with patience. To show hospitality without grudging is to be generous with our time, space, and resources. It all belongs to Jesus anyway. Don't you know at some point you might entertain angels and be unaware of it?

Speaking for God is speaking from God. We don't preach systems of philosophy. We speak from God's heart and with the authority of being his voice. We are holy vessels and carry within us a treasure to be shared with great conviction.

Serve others as serving Christ because we truly do serve Christ in whatever capacity we find ourselves in. Work with all of your heart, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. We will receive our reward from the Lord!

God's grace is expressed in manifold different facets through the lives of each individual in the church. Each man carries a gift which others in the church need. We are stewards of the gift which God gave us. We employ this gift in building the church. The church is the body of Christ and we are living stones rising into a temple of the Lord.

Each gift is special from the man teaching to the man sweeping the floor to the man standing at the door and shaking hands. We are joined together with one purpose and that is to glorify God through the Lord Jesus.

Freely we received and so let us freely give what the Lord Jesus gave us. For me, it is to take truth, internalize, and then shine it out in written and spoken words. It is for me to speak God's word as an oracle and to realize that as I speak the Lord can take my small fishes and loaves and feed the multitudes. The Lord is great and he is able to take our smallest offerings and accomplish his purpose and his plan. My life is in his hands.

We can rest in Him. We trust him to open doors so we can use our gifts as a blessing to the church. May the Name of Jesus Christ be great and glorious.

1 Peter 4:12

As a result of enjoying God's blessings of peace men are startled to wake up one day and encounter suffering. Suffering can come from any direction. It is God's mercy which keeps us from trials and suffering. Jesus told us to pray God would deliver us from temptation so I know it is not normal to go looking for trouble.

We live in a fallen world as a result of man's free will. As we live in this fallen world we will inevitably face trials.

Don't think it strange when suffering happens. As Christians we may get the idea we are exempt from trouble. God does set a hedge of protection around us and protects us but there are times in God's plan that the protection might come down. Remember the prophet Job and his suffering and his patience through his loss.

Job was a righteous man and suffered horribly. He did not suffer because he sinned or had a lack of faith. He suffered because there was a move in heaven between God and Satan. Job was caught in the cross fire in a spiritual battle between the Lord and Satan.

Satan prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone he can devour. Jesus told Peter, "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.*" (**Luke 22:31**).

There are times the enemy jumps the fence and gets into the yard. He slips in through an open door or a window carelessly left open through the night. Why? How?

These questions must be relinquished as secondary to the most important issue. We must be sober, vigilant, and not be surprised when we are confronted by this monster. When we wake up in the night with the hair standing on end... don't be surprised. Satan is relentless. However, remember this truth: Jesus has overcome. Jesus is victor. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Cry out to the Lord! The Lord rebukes Satan on your behalf. The Lord Jesus rebukes the devil!

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

When you suffer don't think you are alone. Others have faced this challenge. You are not alone. Read **1 Corinthians 10:13**.

Saints in every generation were sifted. Few escaped the attack of the enemy. Do not be surprised when you suffer. Remember these trials are used by God to purify us and make our faith in Jesus stronger. All things work together for the good of those who love God (**Romans 8:28**).

1 Peter 4:13

The ability to rejoice during suffering does not come from willpower or understanding. It does not come from a good perspective on a bad situation. It will not arise even when we understand the Bible doctrine that God works out everything for our good and his glory.

The rejoicing is the experience of being one with Christ. (**Galatians 2:20, Romans 6**).

Whether in joy or sorrow just being with Christ is spiritual riches and joy beyond our earthly experience of happiness or sadness. (**Ephesians 1:16-19**). Joined together (**Ephesians 2:5-6**) and being one with Christ in his sufferings is more joyful than any pleasure this world can give. How is this possible?

Because the presence of God is more precious than anything we could ever experience or hope for in this temporary season of existence. The presence of God is outside of time and space, and when he calls your name (**John 10:3**) you know you will live forever with him. When he calls your name you know Jesus Christ is a real Person and He is life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to the Father. **John 14:6**.

The revelation of glory Peter mentioned hearkens back to a glimpse of this glory he saw on the mountain when Christ was transfigured (**Luke 9:28-36**) before Peter, James, and John. Peter saw a glimpse of the glorified Christ (**2 Peter 1:16-17**) on the mountain. He knew the presence of Jesus Christ was all he needed.

After the resurrection Peter could look back on his experience and it enabled him to look forward to what was coming. The revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ will be revealed to all of us one day. The Lord Jesus will return to this planet and we will see Him.

Peter called the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ an "exceeding joy". If we are suffering with Christ now it is because we are one with Christ, and if we are one with Christ then we will see Him. We

will see the revelation of Jesus Christ at his return. This is where the rejoicing comes from when we suffer now. (**2 Timothy 2:11-12**).

Jesus told Paul the grace of God was sufficient for us in sufferings (**2 Corinthians 12:9**). We do not always experience complete relief from the attack of the enemy but we can rest assured God's grace is sufficient. If we suffer we shall also reign with Christ one day. Rest assured the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to our cry. (**Psalms 34:15**)

There is joy in the presence of the Lord which the world knows nothing about (**Psalms 16:11**).

His presence and his glory are more real than anything we can know with our small minds and our limited bodies.

Eventually the Lord will give us new bodies, like his, that can withstand the presence of God and will reflect the glory of God (**Philippians 3:21**).

This is the hope we have (**1 John 3:1-3**). The Lord Jesus is returning, and He will receive us to Himself that where he is we may be also. (**John 14:3**).

If you do not long to be with Jesus ask the Lord to reveal himself to you. Cry out to the Lord until you know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. (**Philippians 3:10-11**).

1 Peter 4:14-16

Without understanding and insight from the Holy Spirit these verses make no sense at all. The unbeliever reads this scripture and could pull his hair out trying to understand this. Be happy when I am reproached? What is there to be happy about?

However, if you have experienced the presence of Jesus Christ and you know the Spirit of God then you should be able to grasp this. Why am I happy if I am reproached for Christ? Because I know that the spirit of glory and of God rests upon me. When someone flips out because I am a Christian it is because the Holy Spirit is a real person. Unbelievers really do hate the Holy Spirit. He convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible also hate the Holy Spirit.

When we suffer as a Christian it is because we belong to Jesus and people can sense this. They are not able to put it into words or explain it. For them it is just a feeling of revulsion or mockery or hatred. They might think these emotions arise because they are superior intellectually. Pride fills their mind with reasons to justify the hate in their heart but the real reason for recoiling from a Christian is that the spirit of glory and of God rests on the Christian.

Peter encouraged them that they should not be ashamed when they were reproached for being a Christian. Reproach and persecution are to be expected. This was the way the world treated the Lord Jesus and we are not above our Master. We cannot expect to be treated by unbelievers in any other way than what Christ also received.

Unbelievers who reproach a Christian are not to be feared. Let us give all the glory to God for this witness of God's hand on our lives. When we are reproached for Christ then we can rejoice. It is evidence the Holy Spirit lives in us and the world can feel Him.

Paul cautioned Christians not to do anything which could bring reproach on the name of Christ. There are brothers who backslide and commit horrible sins. When Christians backslide into sin like this it not only brings reproach on themselves but also on the Lord. Let us not give the enemy occasion to blaspheme the name of Jesus.

1 Peter Chapter 5

1 Peter 5:1

Peter exhorted his fellow elders. He identified himself as an elder in the church. He went on to list his qualifications as an eye witness to the sufferings of Christ.

The glory was the glory of the Lord Jesus when he returns to earth as King of kings. Those who are one with Christ now in his sufferings will be with him when he returns in glory as King of kings. Paul taught that we will reign and rule with Christ when he returns to earth.

How do elders lead the church? How will we reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom? The spiritual authority of God's kingdom is much different from the authority of the present world system. The world system has a hierarchy of oppression and promotion and self exaltation. The kingdom of God is much different than what we experience today with government, business, and society.

The revelation of this kingdom is already shining in the hearts of overcomers in Christ Jesus. The remnant who overcome in these last days taste the goodness of the Lord and sense the arrival of God's kingdom. We stand right now on the threshold of the kingdom of God.

1 Peter 5:2

Peter exhorted elders in their responsibilities. He provided a description of the attitude of spiritual leaders. Peter did not exalt himself over anyone. He put himself on the same level. This is a good example and was also the attitude of Paul. Paul pleaded with Philemon on the basis of love. Love is the only authority we have. We are to love others and encourage men on the basis of Christ's love.

Those who teach should also teach themselves. If a man desires to be an elder he desires a good work but it should not be for the purpose of lifting himself up above his brothers. Self exaltation is not the way of Jesus or the cross. The way of Calvary love and service is to humble ourselves under God's hand. The Christian way of ministry is to deal with others on the basis of love which means there can be no pride, position, prestige, or power given to church leaders.

Jesus told his disciples to love one another and serve one another in the same way he did. He demonstrated leadership by example and humility. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and this should be the attitude of spiritual leaders. Leaders are servants and slaves of all; they are appointed the job of washing the feet of the saints.

The first duty of an elder is feeding the flock of God. This duty is towards the flock near at hand. We are appointed a specific flock and are to feed that flock. If other flocks can benefit from the overflow well and good. The primary focus is on the flock of God among us. They are near at hand who need our help. There is a place for missions in God's plan. It is important but it is more important the flock at hand is fed and nourished first.

What are we to feed the flock? We feed them the bread of life and the living waters. We must feed them Jesus. This means the ministry of the word and it also includes the ministry of prayer. We must be steadfast in prayer and intercession or the ministry of the word will not have the power it needs to penetrate those who need to be fed.

It takes force of spirit and character to communicate so people can really hear the word. There are other spirits hard at work to stop the word of God from finding its mark in the heart of the believer and unbeliever alike.

Jesus told us that Satan will work hard to steal whatever word we preach. We must be willing to take the time to deliver a blow to the enemy in spiritual warfare before we ever open our mouths to teach the word of God.

Jacob overcame with the Lord before he met Esau face to face. He overcame by wrestling with God in prayer. He overcame and we must overcome in prayer as well.

The attitude of an elder has direct impact on the flock. People can tell if a man's heart is in the work. If we force ourselves to fulfill an obligation people feel it and they will not be inspired. In order for anyone to benefit we must not perform our duties under constraint but with a willing heart. People can sense a Pastor's attitude and they know if he is going through the motions or whether his heart is on fire for Jesus.

For those who receive financial support for their ministry there is always the need to evaluate motives for serving. It is so easy to think one deserves to be paid money for serving God.

Paul did say that the Lord ordained that those who labor in the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. This is true. But we must guard our hearts against doing this work for money or a paycheck.

It is the only job in the world where a man cannot allow himself to do the work for the money. There must be a higher motive than making money or earning a paycheck. If a man cannot bring himself to serve for a greater goal than compensation then he will fall to the level of a hireling. He will fall into the error and trap of Balaam. This kind of elder is a dangerous person because there is incredible opportunity to introduce the spirit of covetousness and idolatry into the church by men who serve for filthy lucre.

The reason for serving as elders is because of the Lord Jesus. We hear his voice. We love him because he first loved us. We believe what we do has eternal value and we are living for another world to come. Our goal is not this present life but for a much different kingdom. We should keep our hearts on Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith, and never allow ourselves to slip into an attitude of serving for money or position. We need to maintain, at all times, the heart of a volunteer who shows up each day because he wants to serve Jesus for no other reason than it is our calling and our reasonable service.

1 Peter 5:3

One mistake that men make entering ministry is that they do not grasp the importance of this verse in the Bible. It is incredible how much damage men do when they become lords over God's heritage. It is a devastating blow to the church when men take it on themselves to be lords over God's church. I would say more damage is done to the church by men who assert themselves as lords than even what unbelievers do from the outside. Church leaders are more dangerous than the most blasphemous atheist in doing real harm to the faith of Christians.

I made a commitment to Christ when I was fifteen years old. I was born again and filled with the Holy Spirit when I was 21 years old. This was in the year 1989 when I turned 21 years old. From then until now the number one stumbling block to my faith has not been atheists. My number one stumbling block was pastors and ministry leaders. These men did the most harm and damage to my faith. They caused me more pain than any unbeliever could ever hope to cause.

When I say this one scripture could completely change the church I am not making an understatement. I do not think I am alone in saying that I had more stumbling blocks to my faith from reverends than any other source. I say this with sadness and mourning. Not every single man in the church has been a stumbling block. There were some lowly, humble brothers who were a huge blessing to me.

In the Bible the Lord Jesus is the ultimate example of what this verse describes. He did not lord it over God's heritage but laid down his life for the sheep. He truly was the ultimate example of humility, love, and leading by example.

Another example in the Bible is David. Here was a man who did not assert himself or try to take over God's heritage but he let the Lord exalt him in due time. He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God and at the right time the Lord lifted him up so that he could feed the flock of God.

There is a reason Jesus taught his disciples not to call anyone "master, teacher, rabbi". He taught them to be brothers on level ground and not to exalt one over the other. He taught us to call no man "father" on this earth. Churches who do this employ the system and the principle of the world in their ministry and will burn with the fire of God's judgment at the appointed time.

Everything which can be shaken will be and only what is of the Lord will remain. Let us not build the church on the names of dead theologians but rather let us follow the example of Christ and only magnify our Father who is in heaven.

1 Peter 5:5-7

Here we see two different groups of people. One group of people are "the proud" and the other group of people are "the humble". One group God is against. The other group God gives grace to. I know which group I want to belong to.

What we don't realize is that to be in the humble group you will be looked down on and despised. Most people do not like a humble man. This is natural because the world system is based on pride, assertiveness, aggression. It is based on prestige, power, and position. People hate the humble man.

Pride is the chief characteristic of anyone really successful in the world. How can you tell if someone is successful in the world system? The easiest way to tell if someone is successful in the world is whether or not they have a lot of money. A rich man is almost without exception a man of power, position, prestige, and yes, pride. This is a man the Bible says that God resists. No wonder Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

I want to be humble. This means I will not do well in this world. My heart is not into achieving position and prestige within the system. The Lord may actually promote a humble man within the system, like the prophet Daniel, to achieve his purpose. This is the exception, however, and not the rule.

Even though I do not do well in the world God gives me grace. God gives grace to the humble. My heart's desire is to receive God's grace, and so I am willing to be put in a place where I can receive grace from God. The Lord will arrange a man's life so that he can stay humble and continue to receive grace upon grace. (**2 Corinthians 12:9**).

God's presence, his voice, and staying in his will are the most important things in life to the believer. Once a man has experienced the joy of God's presence then nothing the world has will ever be good enough. A man of God is ruined for this world.

As we have seen throughout 1 Peter the apostle taught about submission to authority. Here he exhorted younger men to submit to the elder and also everyone to submit to everyone else. The example of the Lord Jesus was submission to his heavenly Father.

As Christians we are to live a life of humility and submission. This submission is toward government, towards employers, towards family members, and towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. In every sphere of life the Christian is to have an attitude of submission and humility. This is the attitude to maintain in order to continue to receive God's grace. God's grace enables us to live a life of love, a life of truth, to walk in the light, and to walk in the Spirit.

Remember also at the right time God will lift us up. There is a time coming when believers in Christ will be given authority over the nations to reign and rule with Christ in his kingdom. There is a time of authority in the future, but we must first learn the lesson of humility. (**Proverbs 18:12**).

As we endure this world with an attitude of humility we will suffer. People hate the man of humility. The Lord is on our side and we can cast all our cares on him. The Lord cares for us even though no one else does. The Lord does care for us and he will take care of us even to the end.

1 Peter 5:8-11

The Lord is taking us on a journey. On this journey there is a wild beast set loose who is looking for someone to devour. This beast is described as a lion. I used to keep a picture of a roaring lion on the desktop of my computer to remind me of this. I have an enemy who wants to kill, steal, and destroy. I must remember this and stay alert. I have to keep my mind sharp and be aware of what is happening around me.

This exhortation flies in the face of modern day American Christians who enjoy the opposite of staying sober. Christians today do not fear God or the devil. They are too busy enjoying the pleasures of this

temporary life and do not have their mind set on things above. They are shocked when the enemy attacks them and mauls them.

I recently saw a news story of a man who was attacked by a bear. He barely survived the attack. What was unusual about this story, however, was that this was the second time the man was attacked by a bear on the same stretch of wilderness road. The reporter asked him if he would be going back to that road again for jogging and the man smiled and said, "No, I'm getting too old to fight off these bears..." This man, however, is a good example of the typical Christian today. They are attacked by the devil and keep going back to the same people, places, and things. Pride! They think somehow they are going to outsmart the lion and the bear.

The enemy attacks our brothers and sisters worldwide. We are not to become discouraged by this but instead realize that our suffering is not unusual. When hard times come, don't be dismayed, but realize we are in good company. Suffering is nothing new to Christians. We've been suffering and dying for 2,000 years and will continue to do so until Jesus returns.

Hallelujah, the Lord will return. He will return and will make us perfect. We will be given a new body that is not subject to sin, disease, or death. In our new bodies we will reign and rule with Jesus. The Lord will settle us. We will be given eternal homes, and will no longer wander this sin cursed world of suffering. Praise God, our journey will be over.

The Second Epistle of Peter

2 Peter Chapter 1

2 Peter 1:1-3

Peter made it clear that with the Lord we have everything we need which pertains to life and godliness. All we need comes through our knowledge of the Lord Jesus who called us to glory and virtue. Some may think this only applies to salvation, but I think it goes beyond what is spiritual. The most important thing, of course, is salvation and eternal life. However, I believe the Lord also cares for our current situation and meets us right where we are every day.

He gives us everything which pertains to life and godliness. The Lord is our provider and he gives us everything we need.

Another promise from the Lord is **Matthew 6:33**. These "other things" are the material and physical resources needed to live in this present world. The Lord not only takes care for our spirit but also for the body. Paul taught in his letters the Lord is for the body as well as the spirit.

Our need is met through our knowledge of the Lord Jesus. When a man walks with the Lord he has everything. He can rest as he seeks the Lord that all his needs are met. Our work is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whom God the Father sent into this world. This is our work: to believe in Jesus and to seek him daily.

As we rely on Jesus we experience his work in our lives. Faith comes first; then experience. Experience comes as the Holy Spirit applies the work of Jesus to our life. What was and is true of the Lord Jesus is also real in our daily life. This becomes apparent as the world recognizes who you are and treats you like they treated the Lord Jesus. Read also **Psalm 37:25, Psalm 34:10**.

We can trust the Lord Jesus. He is our help and provider. The Lord is our protector. Cast all of your cares upon him because he cares for you.

2 Peter 1:4

After I was saved by the Lord Jesus one of the first things I did was study the Bible. I was given a Bible verse to memorize which still comes to mind on a regular basis: **Philippians 4:13**. I learned when I felt weak or tempted I could recall scripture and it helped me stand firm. Quoting scripture out loud helped me to maintain momentum in serving the Lord and completing tasks he put in front of me.

The Lord gave us many promises in the Bible which can be used to help us draw closer to God and resist temptation.

When battling temptation there are two verses which come to mind. These help me remember basic principles. The first principle is that God does not tempt me to do evil, but my own flesh leads me into temptation. The second principle is that there is no temptation I face which other Christians have not also faced. These principles are seen in the following scripture verses: **James 1:13-15, 1 Corinthians 10:13**.

How do these scriptures help? Let's take **James 1:13-15**. It is important to take personal responsibility. If we cannot take personal responsibility there is little hope we can overcome these problems.

By memorizing scripture and incorporating the meaning into my thinking I learn to take personal responsibility. I take ownership and do not shift the blame onto others.

The reason I see that some cannot break out of sin is because they shift the blame onto parents, society, or the government. They do not blame themselves for their sins. Having this attitude increases suffering in life. It does not help anyone overcome sin.

The answer is to take ownership and have faith we can overcome with the Lord's power. **Philippians 4:13**.

With the Lord's help I can overcome. But if I never take ownership of my sin then there is little chance I will receive help from the Lord. The Lord only deals with someone who is willing to take responsibility. We must humble ourselves and take ownership. Only by learning this attitude can we grow to become a mature Christian.

First Corinthians 10:13 teaches us the principle that we are not alone. People are defeated by thinking they are alone. They are defeated by thinking their situation is so different that God is not able to help them. They think their sin is something God never helped anyone overcome before.

Whatever sin a person has committed God has seen it before. Jesus still loves us and he is willing to help us overcome if we will humble ourselves. Confess every sin to God. Turn away from sin.

Sometimes one may have to make a decision every hour to overcome sin. The Lord can help if we turn to him. God promises to make a way of escape from sin. If we turn to God during temptation we can find that way of escape.

As we read the Bible underline passages and record them. Record them and listen to it repeatedly. Let the word into your heart, mind, and spirit. When the scripture is needed we can rely on the Holy Spirit to bring it to memory to help overcome sin.

2 Peter 1:5-7

A man is saved by faith alone in Christ alone. This work is God's grace. Even after salvation we can only hope to continue to grow by faith and God's grace. These scriptures do not contradict this doctrine but show us there is a part we take in cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this process. The work is God's but we must agree with God and cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We humble ourselves and receive God's word into our hearts and allow circumstances to conform us into the image of God's Son.

This is a process of adding to faith. These are qualities of the Lord Jesus and a growing Christian puts on these qualities. We need to understand God does not want us to remain spiritual babes but grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Beholding the Lamb of God we become like him day after day.

The problem with this process is we become distracted by a million things as we go forward. At every turn the enemy attempts to make us bitter, resentful, covetous, proud, impatient. We are constantly bombarded from within and without by temptations to get angry when God disciplines us. We are tempted to slack off in the fight of faith. We are tempted to lower our shield of faith for awhile. We think we deserve to take a break. The thought comes, "Haven't I worked enough already? Haven't I done a good job lately persevering? I deserve a rest, a break." These thoughts are deadly, because there is only forward or backward momentum in the spiritual life. A man cannot sit still and let life pass him by. If you rest you will go backwards.

We must wake up and cry out to the Lord to help us go forward and not backward. We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We must be ready for God to bring circumstances which will challenge us to put on these qualities. The bottom line is we need to be willing to die to self and grow in the Lord Jesus.

The goal is love. The old English word "charity" means love. God's goal is a life of love. We are to love others as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. We love and lay down our life for others.

2 Peter 1:8

Paul compared the qualities of a believer to fruit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). No doubt these word pictures originated with the Lord Jesus who spoke of fruit, vines, and bearing fruit in **John chapter 15**.

When a farmer plants a fruit tree it is with the purpose of bearing fruit. There is an understanding it takes time for a tree to mature to bear fruit. However, if the tree is defective and for some reason does not absorb nutrients, water, and whatever it needs to grow and thrive, then even if it bears fruit the result will not be good.

The Lord is a faithful gardener of his vineyard. He constantly puts us in circumstances which will remove hindrances if we cooperate. This is key. We must understand the heavenly Father is in control of every detail in our lives and glorify God in every circumstance. We need communion each day in the word, in prayer, in fellowship, in serving, in worshiping. We need these to grow but notice the list Peter made does not touch on those actions. He speaks of adding to faith the qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in what he brings so we can be conformed to the Lord Jesus.

God desires for us that we bear fruit. We are free moral agents just like our grandparents Adam and Eve. If we want to we can also refuse to obey and will be unable to produce spiritual fruit. This can happen to the Christian after believing in Christ. Without getting into divisive doctrines, let me say: Jesus is a real person and so are we. We are secure as long as we listen to his voice and continue to live in agreement with him. This begins with salvation and continues as long as we continue to listen, believe, cooperate, and agree. God gave us the ability to agree or disagree. We must choose to agree with God even when it means standing against ourselves.

Our lives will bear fruit for the Lord when we agree with him. Eventually there will be a hard word the Lord speaks to us; a word which will test us. God's word tests us; yes it will! Don't think God will not test your willingness to submit to and obey him. He will allow you to be tested and try your faith so you will know that you love him.

When our goal is to grow in faith we will be fruitful in the Lord Jesus. However, if we stop growing then spiritual life dries up. People sense the change quickly. This is especially true of those who were passionate about God's will. When they stop obeying the Lord it is in contrast to their former attitude and it is noticeable to others.

Believe in the Lord Jesus. This is the only work God gave us. Believe in the Son of God who was sent into the world. Our work is to believe in the Lord Jesus. As we believe he prunes us and makes us grow. As we cooperate with the Holy Spirit he adds to our faith.

2 Peter 1:9

Here we see the consequences when a man does not add to his faith. Not only does he become unfruitful but he loses his discernment. He becomes nearsighted and then blind. This process removes discernment and promotes memory loss. He forgets what Jesus did for him. He forgets when God saved him.

We don't start out intentionally to forget. We forget because we neglect to grow in the Lord. The only way a man can grow is to put into practice God's word. There is no day of vacation or rest. Not only do we maintain the basic discipline of prayer, Bible study, service, worship, fellowship but we must add to our faith these qualities. As a reminder: add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

How do we grow in these qualities? By denying ourselves and taking up our cross and by following Jesus. We must keep our eyes on Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith. Take your eyes off Jesus and you sink beneath the waves like Peter.

The Holy Spirit builds these qualities into our life as we believe in Jesus. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit. As we humble ourselves, repent, confess, and obey the Lord we are conformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus.

I've seen men who once put their trust in Jesus neglect to add to their faith. I've seen men who preached God's word but did not practice it. They were callous to their wives and took them for granted. They took God's blessings for granted. Ministry became a business. Slowly they become ashamed of their testimony. They let go of what God did for them.

It was only a matter of time before they lost their discernment and were reckless again. I've seen this pattern in men I cared a lot about. They forget. They get blind. It happens just like Peter described it right here in this letter.

What should I pray? Lord Jesus, help me to remember. Help me to remember everything you did for me. Help me remember every time you spoke to me and corrected me. Help me remember every time you corrected me and comforted me. Help me remember God's love and mercy. Help me remember the Bible verses I memorized so long ago. Help me to apply your word to my life. Don't let me go astray, oh God most high, oh God who performs all things for me. Help me walk the narrow path and enter the straight gate.

2 Peter 1:10-11

When I was young I was afraid I would return to the life I had before I was a Christian. These verses taught me how to overcome this fear: grow spiritually everyday. These verses summarize what Peter taught in the preceding verses. He taught us to make our calling and election sure.

How do we do this? By growing in the Lord. We grow by adding to our faith. We add to our faith the attributes of Christ.

How is this accomplished? By steadfastly holding to our faith in the Lord Jesus everyday. These comments do not contradict the fact that we are secure in our salvation in Jesus.

However, if we stop believing in Jesus then nothing is secure; we are lost. Only by looking to Jesus Christ the author and the finisher of our faith do we receive eternal life. Eternal life is in Jesus Christ. In him we have life. If we stop looking to Jesus we do not have life. If we trust in philosophy, religion, doctrines, programs, or systems then we do not have eternal life. Only Jesus can give eternal life, because he is eternal life.

Remember that everything we need in this life is only found in the Lord Jesus. No amount of good works can make us grow spiritually. Spiritual life is a result of abiding in Christ Jesus the Lord. We grow as we abide in the Lord Jesus and submit to his word. He has a word for us everyday. Just like Israel went out and picked up manna everyday in order to stay alive physically God has a word for us everyday to keep us alive spiritually. We must remember this. Life is in the Lord Jesus. If we are not hearing God's word then we are dying spiritually. Spiritual death is separation from God.

Peter instructed us to make our calling and election sure. Being called and elected is God's grace. Making the calling and election sure is something we do in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. What do we do? We believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God. We believe everyday. No matter what happens to us

or what circumstance we are in we see the hand of God in everything. We know God is working to conform us to the image of his Son Jesus Christ. This is our purpose: to glorify God by reflecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is an "if" promise. "If" we make our calling and election sure then we will never fall. Is it possible to fall? Paul mentioned those who fell from grace in the book of Galatians. There are men who once believed but turned away and went back to the world. Were they saved? They were when they believed but when they stopped believing in Jesus and so they were no longer saved. Only those who believe Jesus is the Son of God have eternal life. If we do not want to fall away from Christ we must make our calling and election sure. Making our calling and election sure means we must grow spiritually. We must add to our faith. We must add virtue, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. We must grow in the character of the Lord Jesus. This growth comes from the Holy Spirit who lives in us, and we must yield, we must submit, we must receive the grafted word of God which saves us. We must not rebel or stop believing in Jesus.

As we grow in Jesus we receive a rich welcome into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. I pray when I depart this body I will be in the process of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ more everyday. I want to be growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

2 Peter 1:12-15

Peter repeated the word "remembrance" throughout these verses. He said he would not neglect to put them in remembrance of the things they were established in and knew as the truth. He said as long as he was alive he would keep stirring up their memory of the truth. Also, even after he passed, he wanted to make sure they would still remember what he taught them about Jesus.

Remembering is an important part of the Christian life. We know the gospel today but we have to remember it everyday or we might forget. It is possible to go days and not think about the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. It is possible to forget what our lives are built on, which is the foundation of the Lord Jesus.

We need brethren to stir us up to proclaim the gospel. Especially now when the end is close and the Lord's return is near we need to stir up the memory of the Lord Jesus. He purchased us with his blood. He rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven. He will return to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also.

Peter was not the only one who taught us to stir up our memory. Paul emphasized this to Timothy. He told Timothy to remember. We should remind others of the gospel. It is our duty to remind ourselves of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remind our brothers of the same. The body of Christ needs Christians to remember who they are in Christ Jesus.

Remember the Lord. Don't forget what the Lord did for us. Don't forget what he did in our lives. Remember he forgave our sins. Continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We don't want to retrace our steps or backslide. We want to go forward with the Lord.

2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter offered proof for the gospel. He began with his eyewitness account of the Lord Jesus. He remembered the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus on the mountain when Elijah and Moses appeared. Peter was not the only one who witnessed this event. James and John were there. Peter remembered the voice of the heavenly Father speaking and the exact words which he spoke: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

I believe when someone hears the voice of God he remembers the exact words God spoke. This happened to me twice in my life so far. This happened on August 4 and August 8, 2014. I will never forget hearing God's voice and the exact words he said. It absolutely changed me to hear God's voice.

I heard the Lord say to himself, "*Consider this one.*"

Then he said to me: "*Mike, can you believe I am speaking to you?*"

"Yes, Lord, I believe you speak to me, " I replied.

Then he filled me with the Holy Spirit and I prophesied about God three in one.

He also said to me on August 8: "*Hidden manna.*" There were also words he spoke which I heard but were not directed at me.

The first thing I heard God say on August 4, 2014 was: "*Consider this one.*"

And then on August 8, 2014 he said: "*He will receive, but he does not understand.*"

This encounter with God absolutely changed me and confirmed God's calling on my life. I'm doing my best now to obey God's calling.

Peter heard the voice of the Father. Yet he said that there is a more sure word which we can stand on than experiences with God. He pointed us to the Bible. God's word is settled in heaven. His word will never change. God's word also is where the gospel is preached and we can stand on the Holy Bible for faith and salvation.

Another proof Peter pointed to is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit used holy men to write the scriptures. The Holy Spirit is a witness to us of the gospel and the reality of the present greatness of Christ Jesus. Amen.

2 Peter Chapter 2

2 Peter 2:1

Peter warned about false prophets. The fact Peter warned the church is proof enough there are tares among the wheat. There are people who are sent by the devil to lead others astray.

One way they accomplish this is by preaching a compromised gospel. They preach about money. Their message is based on greed and a love of the world. Their message is the opposite of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. False prophets preach man-centered and self-centered doctrine. A true prophet points men to Jesus and promotes Jesus. The true gospel is about denying self and lifting up Jesus. The false gospel exalts men and focuses on success in the world system.

The Lord Jesus warned people about covetousness and taught us to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness. False prophets teach people to live the good life now and to be successful in this world system. The world system is based on idolatry and covetousness. Those who preach this message in the church are the false prophets Peter warned about.

False prophets teach a message of freedom but they are slaves to lust and sin. They are slaves of sin and self and yet they teach to others a message of freedom. It is a false freedom.

Jesus warned about false brothers, Jude wrote an entire letter on this subject, Paul warned about them, and Peter also warned against false prophets and false teachers.

Because gullible people follow false teachers the way of truth (the gospel and the church) is evil spoken of. I could clip out newspaper articles that demonstrate this. How much has the world blasphemed God as a result of men like this? There are too many to even list. People are turned away from believing in God and mock the church because of false teachers. I remember as a child I had relatives who regularly mocked preachers because of their carnival like behavior and claims of supernatural power.

I think we can see this in action in the American church. Society mocks the church because of prosperity charlatans. Every once in a while I'll see something in the news about one of these men asking for millions of dollars to buy an airplane, and I am reminded of these scriptures. The unbelievers blaspheme God because of these fake preachers. Just recently I saw an article in a major newspaper about one buying another private airplane and the secular reporters are shocked that so-called Christian preachers can justify their flaunted wealth.

Christians need to come out of this foolishness. We need to recognize these false preachers and have nothing to do with them. We need to let our hearts be settled by the eternal message of God's grace and not participate with fake brethren. By their fruits you can know them. Once you recognize them then don't listen to them anymore. Don't debate or argue. Just get away from them. (**Proverbs 14:7**).

Peter exposed the certainty of false teachers. They introduce a false gospel which separates men from the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Their message causes men to deny the Lord just like Judas when he betrayed Christ. They bring swift destruction on themselves. Those who teach heresy destroy lives and destroy their own soul in the process.

Throughout Paul's letters we see Paul defended the gospel against false teachers.

In Galatians he defended the gospel against false teachers whose message was for Christians to obey religious laws. They wanted to turn Christians into Hebrew Christians or Jewish Christians. There is a movement in the church today which promotes this false gospel. It destroys faith in the true gospel of grace.

Paul defended his personal ministry on many occasions against false teachers who attacked or lied about him.

Nothing has changed. False teachers still secretly bring in heresies. What makes these false teachers so dangerous today is the easy access to social media which they can use to broadcast heresy on the internet. The internet is full of poison which pretends to be Christian doctrine. It's better to get our doctrine from the Bible and on our knees before the Lord in prayer. The Lord is able to teach us his word and keep us on the right path. Pray for the Lord to give you ears to hear his voice and a heart to obey when he speaks to you.

Jesus said you can know false teachers by their fruits.

In my experience, here's a list of bad fruit I've seen:

Men who promote their own name. These men plaster their name all over church signs, newsletters, business cards, and ministry materials. They want people to know their name. They want to build a ministry which lifts up their name. Their mission is to get as many people to come under their name as they can find. They operate exactly like the world. There is no difference between these men and corporate America.

Men who teach a message laced with covetousness. People who constantly teach their listeners how to get rich or that God wants them to get rich. They ask you to invest your money into their ministry and God will reward you. Their message is a ponzi scheme but instead of selling trinkets they peddle a false gospel. Run away from these charlatans as fast as you can.

Men who organize ministry into a systematic hierarchy with themselves at the top. This is a more subtle form of using the world system style of government and business in the church. Instead of using their name they are clever enough to come up with a name for their ministry. The more successful ones will recruit and multiply groups to come under their umbrella and attempt to deny they have a hierarchical system by calling themselves a "fellowship". Another name for this is "denominations". Many in their ranks join this system as a career move to make a living or to have a religious career.

Men whose theology is so systematic there is no room left for the reality of the Lord Jesus. If the Lord Jesus walked into their church they would not accept him unless he submitted to their bylaws and church rules.

You might think these examples do not really point to false teachers. I insist these people are teaching a false gospel and are false teachers. Any man who lifts himself up above his brethren by giving himself a position or title is by his own example teaching a false gospel. Even if his doctrine is correct his example is false: it is not the example of the Lord Jesus and therefore instills within their followers a false spiritual pride. I had one of these ministers tell me one time that his followers were the "Green Beret" of the church. They were the "Special Forces" in God's Army at that ministry.

There are a lot more signs which warn a man about a false teacher or ministry.

Look around at what they have on the walls of their office. Is their office covered with degrees and titles? This shows how worldly and filled with pride they are. I walked into a ministry one time and they had a New Age yin yang symbol taped to the wall of their office. Sometimes it doesn't take a whole lot of discernment to figure out who the false teachers and ministries are.

So why do we keep attending the churches of these false teachers? Probably a lot of it has to do with force of routine. We are simply too lazy to go find someplace else to go to church.

Some men who attend these churches know the pastor is crazy or is teaching crazy messages but they still attend the church and by doing so support that Pastor.

They might think that by staying they can do some good. A man has to follow the Holy Spirit and listen to his conscience on this.

However, let's remember that God commanded us in his word to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them. (**Ephesians 5:11**). The Bible teaches us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (**2 Corinthians 6:14**), and really false teachers are unbelievers. They do not believe the true gospel and by promoting their false gospel they deny the Lord Jesus. (**Proverbs 14:7**).

2 Peter 2:2

Definition of "**pernicious**": *causing great harm or damage often in a way that is not easily seen or noticed.*

"Pernicious" is how Peter describes the false teachers. They accomplish great harm or damage in a way that is not easily seen or noticed. Why does the church not notice false teachers?

As a result of false teachers the way of truth gets a bad reputation and is evil spoken of. People blaspheme God, the church, and the gospel because of false teachers. They revile the church because the unbelieving man is not stupid. Sometimes the unbeliever is quicker than Christians at spotting wolves and false teachers.

Perhaps the church does not notice false teachers because they do good works. I spoke with a missionary one time who truly loved God but was burned out because churches did not support his work. However, a famous prosperity preacher did support his work. As a result, this missionary overlooked the heresy because of the help in supporting missions. This is the pernicious way of false teachers. They do good works with one hand and in the other they insert doctrines of devils into the church.

Another reason churches overlook false teachers is a twisted view of grace. I don't know of anyone who preached more on God's grace than Paul. But I can think of two places where Paul talked about putting people out of the church or turning people over to Satan. This was the apostle of grace who rebuked, corrected, and exhorted with all long suffering and doctrine. However, the teaching of grace is abused in our day of apostasy. It is much easier to talk of forgiving wolves in the church than it is to drive them out.

When false teachers are not confronted it gives a pastor a bad reputation. The pastor is considered a coward and the church is looked upon as compromising. The world does not stick around for this. They have enough problems surviving Monday through Friday. Why come to church on Sunday and deal with this drama?

Be vigilant to expose false brethren. We must be faithful in this work. If we do not do this we don't love the church. We are held accountable for the good we fail to do because we are cowards.

2 Peter 2:3

How do false teachers make merchandise of Christians? How do they use covetousness and feigned words to make merchandise of Christians?

The key to understanding this is defining covetousness. Through their teaching they instill covetousness into people. They inflame this desire in people for money and power. Covetousness can be applied to many things but in context we are looking at money because Peter said they make merchandise of Christians.

Making merchandise of something is to convert something or person into a commodity that can be bought and sold. These people turn Christians into currency. They make false promises. This is the feigned words. They are liars and their message is a lie but somehow they wrap up this covetous lying message into Christian words which deceive people. The result of this deception is that the Christians are turned into a commodity. They are sold lies and they pay for those lies with seed faith gifts to the false teachers' ministry.

This kind of activity is rampant through the American church, and probably around the world as well.

This deception has been around since Peter's time. These false teachers were taking advantage of Christian fellowships back as far as the early church. May the Lord open our eyes and give us the discernment to avoid these people.

2 Peter 2:4-9

When the Lord deals with his children in judgment it is for correction to make them better. When God deals with the wicked it is for punishment; there is nothing redemptive in God's punishment of the wicked. He simply gives them what they deserve.

Peter provided examples from Bible history of God's judgment on the wicked. The first example began before man. He pointed to the angels who sinned against God and followed Satan. These angels were cast out of heaven and down to hell. They were delivered into chains of darkness and now wait final judgment when hell and the wicked are cast into the lake of fire.

The next example Peter gave was God's judgment on the entire world during the time of Noah. The Lord judged the world with a flood which wiped out mankind except for Noah and his family.

After this, another example was God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. People tried to twist the story of God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah to make it sound like God was not actually

judging the sin of homosexuality. But that is exactly what that judgment was about. God rained down fire and brimstone on the sodomites.

The wicked think that because God delays his punishment that God does not see what they do. However, the Bible says the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, watching the good and the evil. **Proverbs 15:3**, "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*"

Hell is punishment. There is a day coming of God's wrath and judgment against the wicked. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**, **Revelation 21:8**. You can escape this awful fate by turning to God in repentance, putting your complete faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and by calling on the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him for he lives to make intercession for us. He is returning again to this earth and will receive us to himself that where he is we may be also.

2 Peter 2:10-11

In **1 and 2 Peter** we see one of the basic principles of the Christian life is an attitude of humility. Peter taught humility in the family, workplace, and toward government. Even when those authorities are harsh Peter exhorted us to an attitude of humility. He said it is better to suffer for well doing. False teachers have the exact opposite attitude toward authority.

False teachers despise government. They have an attitude of rebellion against authority. I've noticed in preachers who do not submit to elders or brethren that sooner or later you hear them criticizing leaders in their denomination or getting heavily into politics. This is an attitude of self will and presumption. It is presumptuous because we do not trust God with people over us. We can appeal to the Lord on behalf of people in authority which is exactly what Paul commanded in **1 Timothy 2:1-4**.

When men in ministry no longer respect those in authority you can rest assured there is something wrong. They are transformed into false teachers if they are not already. A true God sent man is a man of humility.

One example I can think of in modern times is Watchman Nee. He knew he would be betrayed and arrested. Nevertheless he submitted himself to his brethren. They turned him over to the authorities. As a result Watchman Nee died in a prison camp as a martyr for Christ. He was one of the greatest Bible teachers of the twentieth century.

Let's remember to live a quiet life and mind our own business. It is not our place to assume we know better than those in authority. Let us focus on being a good witness for Jesus and sharing the gospel at every opportunity.

2 Peter 2:12-14

Here Peter described what he called "cursed children". Here was a list of the qualities in these cursed children: (1) Act like animals, (2) Speak evil, (3) Like to party no matter what time of day, (4) They have no problem intermingling with church people and attending social functions with Christians, (5) They seduce weak Christians, (6) They are covetous. That is quite a descriptive list. It shouldn't be too hard to discern these people in church, but most Christians I've met are not able or willing to see these people for what they are. Why?

One reason is bad teaching on God's love and grace and forgiveness. God is love but love only benefits those who repent of their sins and put their faith in the Lord Jesus. The Bible makes it clear God's wrath abides on those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God put on a curse on mankind when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eve. It is the curse of death and death is working in our bodies. The law of sin and death corrupts us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. There is no hope of escaping this curse unless a man humbles himself, confesses that God is true and right, and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross he took this curse on himself so we could be delivered from all curses.

The Lord stretches out his hands to us today. All we have to do is humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, turn away from self, and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we will no longer be under God's curse but we can abide under the blessing and grace of the Lord.

2 Peter 2:21-22

There is nothing more heart breaking than to know someone who was once a brother in Christ and turned back to the world. When I first became a Christian I lived in a residential program for men with life controlling problems. If a man in that program went back to the world it meant they turned away from the Lord but it also meant they went back to drug and alcohol addiction. There were some men who loved getting high more than they loved Jesus.

Don't be like a dog who goes back to its vomit. Don't be a pig that goes back to wallowing in the mud again. These verses spoke straight to my heart. The Lord showed me he could change me. Every day of obedience was another day of change and another day of change was more distance between the new me and the old. I needed to put as much distance as possible between the old and the new.

It is interesting this verse says it would be better to never have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn from it. Before I went into this program a youth pastor told me, "Don't leave. Don't even think about it. If you leave you will become so bitter you will never turn back to the Lord probably." Those words had a huge impact on me putting one foot in front of the next and never looking back.

Why is it better to never know the truth? Because you always remember. You never again enjoy getting high. Your conscience smites you and makes you miserable. There is never any rest to the man who knows the truth and does not live by it. This man can no longer enjoy the pleasure of sin. It is sand in his mouth even though he may keep stuffing his mouth full of dirt.

Another reason it is better not to know the truth is because if you turn away you become a much harder man. You overcompensate with filling your mind with entertainment, lies, addictions, anything to drown your conscience. As a result a man ends up in a much bigger mess than before.

I saw this happen. After I finished the program I worked as staff for several years. I saw what happened to men who came to the program, left the program, and came back again. They were always in worse shape the second time.

It is better after you know the way of righteousness just to keep walking the straight and narrow. Don't turn back. Don't retrace your steps. Make the commitment to the Lord and do not compromise. You

cannot live in two worlds at the same time. You can not serve God and serve yourself at the same time. Make up your mind to deny self, take up your cross, put your hand to the plow, and never look back.

2 Peter Chapter 3

2 Peter 3:1-2

Peter echoed Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy. Paul exhorted Timothy to stir up the gift of God within him and to keep that good thing which was given to him. Peter exhorted Christians to stir up their pure minds and remember.

There is a lot in these letters about remembering. A big part of the Christian life is remembering the truth, the facts, and what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for us. We remember the simplicity of the gospel: Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. He died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb. He rose from the dead on the third day. These events were witnessed by his disciples. Jesus ascended back to the Father after he rose from the dead. He is now at the right hand of the heavenly Father and lives forever making intercession for us. He will return to the earth at some point in future history. These are not fanciful ideas but are facts stated plainly in the Bible.

Knowing the gospel and abiding in the truth sets us free from self, sin, the world system, and the devil. Christ provides forgiveness of sins and also deliverance from sin, self, the world, and the devil. God the Father placed us in Christ and we abide by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter gave us the purpose for his second letter. He wanted to remind us of the words of the holy prophets, the commandments of the apostles including Peter himself. From this we see the Old and New Testament are vital in understanding the complete salvation provided by the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does "pure minds" mean? Perhaps this parallels what Jesus said to Peter when he washed Peter's feet. He said he was clean through the word spoken to him. He only needed his feet washed. We also received eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also need to stir up our pure minds. Our minds have been purified by the truth and by the washing of water of God's word. But we need to remember the word. We need to meditate on the word day by day.

Like the disciples needed only to wash their feet we also need to be washed daily in the water of God's word. We need to remember the gospel. Let's never let go of the facts. The facts provide the foundation, the walls, and the roof for our lives. If we let go of the facts will lose our purpose in life. We need to remember the facts in God's word.

Let's remember what the prophets and apostles of the Lord preached to us through the written word of God. We have the testimony of God in scripture. This testimony is that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to God except through the Son of God Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:3-7

A scoffer is an outspoken unbeliever. They are beyond apathy and aggressive in their antagonism of those who believe in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One sign of the last days is scoffers who mock the return of Jesus Christ. This sign is evident today in America. America went from a country of religion to antagonism against religious faith. Some catalysts of these changes were technology, media, and perversion. In the mix there was drug addiction and idolatry. Underlying it all is the love of money and the lust for power.

The Lord Jesus announced he would return. The apostles preached the return of the Lord Jesus. This is a basic doctrine in the church. From the beginning the church taught that one day Jesus Christ would return to earth. Read **Acts 1:11, John 14:3**.

In the past when God judged the earth he flooded the planet. Everything drowned on the planet except for those in Noah's ark. This is the judgment Peter referred to in these verses. However, the next worldwide judgment will not be water. The next judgment will be with fire.

Scripture confirms this future judgment by fire. Read **Revelation 20:9, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**. Eventually scoffers are cast into a lake of fire. This takes place at the great white throne judgment of God. Read **Revelation 20:9-15; Revelation 21:8**.

Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners. He died on the cross so men would not suffer for eternity in the lake of fire. He bore our punishment on himself when he died on the cross. He was buried, and on third day he rose from the dead. We do not need to live in sin. We can turn away from our sin and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can receive eternal life in the name of Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Do not leave this life without finding the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

2 Peter 3:8-9

Men assume since God's judgment is not immediate that God never judges sin. This explains why men become bold in their sin. Men today glorify sin and boast of perversion, and the world applauds their perversion. However, God is patient. He is long suffering towards evil people because it is God's will for them to repent and put their faith in Jesus. Some will repent and some will find Jesus.

God does not measure time as we do. Peter mentioned the phrase "*a thousand years as a day*". God sees time from eternity. We cannot attain this reference point. We cannot imagine anything that does not have a beginning and an end to it.

It should be underlined in the Bible the phrase "not willing that any should perish", because I have heard well-meaning Christians say that Christ did not die on the cross for everyone but only for a select group of people. It is true that in eternity there is an elect group of people who God foreknew from the foundation of the world that would be saved. However, this also does not cancel out the fact that God's will is for no one to perish. It is God's will for all men to come to repentance. How can this be the character of God and then we come up with a systematic theology which claims Christ only died for some people? Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners which includes every man, woman, and child who ever lived or who will ever live.

We have an opportunity to repent and put our faith in Jesus and be saved. Let us take advantage of the time we have. This is the day the Lord has made. We are not promised we will reach tomorrow.

2 Peter 3:10-13

Peter described a future event in which the entire universe is melted down. He says the "elements shall melt", and I don't think one can get more basic than the elements. When the elements melt there is nothing left except what is not made from elements.

We should meditate on our lives and ask the question: "what manner of persons ought ye to be?" In view of the future fiery meltdown how should I live? This is a good question to ask and I can think of few events which would put me in such a serious frame of mind. Not even one's own death is as serious as the meltdown of the universe.

All that makes it through the fire are souls of men and God. The souls of men are eternal. A man's soul will either spend eternity with God or be eternally separated from God but men's souls continue somewhere forever. Man is made in the image of God and part of being made in God's image is to have a soul which endures forever.

After the fire dissolves the universe God creates a new heavens and a new earth where only righteousness lives.

This furnace is part of what the Bible teaches about the "day of the Lord". There is a lot more involved in the day of the Lord than just the end. We also know the millennial reign of Christ on earth after the second coming is part of the "day of the Lord" as well. The fire Peter described here takes place after the great white throne of God's judgment. You can read about this at the end of **Revelation 20** and the beginning of **Revelation 21**.

Peter described the attitude of a Christian as anticipating eagerly the end of the universe. Indeed, I believe Spirit filled Christians look forward to a new heavens and new earth where only righteousness lives. Our heart desires freedom from sin and this world system.

Since there is an end to the universe how should I live? I do not want to live invested only in what is temporary. I don't want to be obsessed with the details of life. It is important to live with an eternal perspective. I ask myself when I am stressed out: who will care in a hundred years? Who will remember this in a hundred years? There is nothing so important it will even be remembered a few years after I am dead. Why am I obsessed with my own importance? It is better to realize the time I spent in this body is brief in light of eternity.

Instead of preparing to live a short life on earth young people should prepare themselves to live for eternity. We should learn when we are young to invest ourselves in activities which will mean something ten thousand years from now. What has meaning that far into the future? The souls of men! And studying God's word. Studying God's word, memorizing, meditating, and applying God's word to everyday life. When we do this we invest in an eternal future and not just in the temporary time in this body.

I remembered life's brevity recently when I received news a family member passed away. She was in her nineties but if someone asked her if ninety years was a long time she would have said it all went by quickly. Life is brief.

Remember to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. Remember to invest in what really matters. Give yourself wholeheartedly to following God's will every day.

2 Peter 3:14-16

The question arises when I read this: am I without spot and blameless? Did the blood of Jesus Christ remove my sins and make me white as snow?

The answer to this question is "YES", a resounding "YES", the blood of Jesus Christ removes all of our sins and our transgressions. We have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

So why does Peter admonish believers to be without spot and blameless when the Lord returns? Since we know the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ saved us I assume Peter spoke about something which causes us blame and spots.

What causes a believer to get spots and be blamed? Turning away from believing Jesus. They become enamored with the gods of the pagan world. The Holy Spirit drove this home to me. Believers can be seduced by religious spirits to become fascinated with other gods. No one in their right mind would purposely turn away from Christ. But it is possible for Christians to mix in other gods and religions. This was the downfall of King Solomon in the Bible.

It is easy be enamored with the beauty of world religions. How can Christianity be the only religion which is true when people all over the world have faith? These non-Christian people are wonderful people. Christianity can appear dull and boring next to some of these religions, philosophies and belief systems. Religious spirits are seductive to Christians who are not rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Throughout **2 Peter** we see how many times Peter warned of false teachers. Paul also made it a large part of his ministry to warn people of false teachers and doctrines. Throughout the history of Israel we see Israel continually seduced by religions of the nations surrounding them.

People who are not sound in the gospel are called unlearned and unstable by Peter. Peter said these believers twist Scripture to their own destruction. I've seen this in my own experience with people who knew just enough of the Bible to inoculate themselves against the truth of Jesus Christ. To many people who say they are a Christian the Lord Jesus becomes only an idea or a philosophy.

He is not. He is a real person. He is a man who walked on earth and a man who will return to earth again. He will reign as King over all nations. He died on a cross, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead on the third day.

All other religions are counterfeits. Satan plants tares of false religion throughout history. We can be overwhelmed by the many people who never heard the gospel. We are tempted to think God is unjust in allowing these people to go into an eternity of punishment when they never even heard of Jesus.

However, who are we to question God? God is just. The massive numbers of unsaved humanity descending into the abyss without Christ Jesus does not cancel out the exclusive claims of Christ himself: He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to the Father. No one can come to God except through Jesus Christ. No one.

If we are heart broken about those people who never heard the gospel perhaps God is calling us to be a missionary to those people? Perhaps we are heart broken because God is heart broken, and he shows us these people who do not know Christ for a reason. How shall they hear unless someone preaches to them? How can they preach unless they are sent? Perhaps God is sending you to these unreached people to share the gospel with them.

But take the time to learn the gospel. Take the time to make sure your faith is rooted, grounded and unmoved from Christ and him alone.

We want to appear before Christ without spot and blameless. The only way to do this is to remain in Christ, to abide in God's word, and to let God's truth cleanse us everyday. Brother and sister, stay in prayer, and stay in the Word.

2 Peter 3:17-18

In these closing comments Peter exhorted us not to be led away with the error of the wicked and fall from our steadfastness. Why was Peter determined to warn Christians to not fall away?

When is the last time you heard a Pastor preach about the possibility of Christians falling away from their faith in Christ? I think this is overlooked because it does not fit in with the airtight, man-made systems denominations use to control people.

Peter reminded us that faith is not static. Faith is power which God puts into man and it is fluid. It is constantly on the move. If faith is not disciplined to remain focused on Christ alone it will wander the world looking for worthless objects to rest on. Men automatically love creation more than the Creator the moment they take their eyes off Jesus.

This wavering of men can be seen around us. People are fickle in their faith. Their lust for experiences far exceeds the desire to simply deny self and believe the gospel. The gospel is too simple for man's pride. We want something more beautiful, exciting, or exotic.

Peter appealed to us not to fall away from a steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He exhorted us to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is all we need for life and godliness.

Let us return to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't lose out with God over a temporary high or pleasure. Return to the Lord Jesus with all your heart, emotions, mind, and all your love. Do not forsake your first love in Jesus but return again to Jesus.

Jesus waits for us. He never leaves us and he never forsakes us. He waits with arms outstretched and his eyes are filled with compassion.

Let us bow our heads and our hearts before him.

Oh Lord, have mercy upon us and help us. Help us return to you again. Revive us, oh God, and let your fire burn in us. Deliver us from idols and every false god. Deliver us from the seductive world system we are in. Help us, open our eyes, so we can see with your eyes. Help us, oh Lord Jesus and give us ears to hear Your Spirit speaking deep in our spirit again. In Jesus name.

The First Epistle of John

1 John Chapter 1

1 John 1:1

John described Jesus as "*the Word of life*". He is the Word made flesh. John said they saw him, looked upon him, and touched him. This was a personal witness of Jesus Christ. John did not share abstract facts. He did not teach religion. He described someone he saw, touched, and listened to.

The eyewitness of John of the Lord Jesus is central. John was a witness of the life, ministry, teaching, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. He told us Jesus Christ is eternal life. Anyone who has the Lord Jesus has eternal life. If we do not have the Lord Jesus we do not have eternal life.

John and the other disciples saw Jesus. They believed the testimony of the Lord Jesus and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. They were convinced of who Jesus is.

Jesus said to Thomas, "*because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" (**John 20:29**)

Today we do not see with our eyes but we believe. We believe the testimony of John: Jesus is the Son of God and he is the Word of God. He is eternal life.

We see with spiritual eyes, by faith: Jesus is who John said he is. Anyone who denies the testimony in John's letter is calling God a liar.

I do not want to call God a liar. I believe the witness and testimony: Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is who John said he is. He is eternal life.

1 John 1:2

Eternal life, Jesus, the Father, and fellowship are all intertwined into one idea. Much like who God three in one is. He is one God revealing himself to us in time in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not modalism. He is eternally and always three in one, unchanging, eternally the same God who is three in one and one in three.

This God manifested himself in our world and became a man: the Lord Jesus Christ. John gave us his testimony that he saw him, touched him, heard him, and witnessed his acts. It is our choice to accept or reject this testimony. However, our faith or unbelief does not change the historical facts and truth.

John called the Lord Jesus "the life" and "that eternal life" in this verse. Jesus also referred to himself as "life". **John 14:6**, "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" He is "the life". This life is eternal. If a man does not have this life he will die and experience eternal death which is complete separation from "that life".

Eternal life is a person so it is impossible to have "eternal life" outside of a relationship with him. Since he is eternal life then it is only by faith in him and a relationship with him we can also experience eternal life. **John 15:6**, *"If a man abide not in me (Jesus), he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."*

Separation from eternal life, from Jesus, is described as being "burned". This is the fate of every person who rejects the Lord Jesus and turns their own way. Eternal death. This is not unfair. It is reality and it is the truth.

Jesus was with the Father and then he came into the world from the Father. He said this to his disciples, to the public, and to his enemies on several occasions which were recorded in scripture. After he rose from the dead he ascended back to his Father. He is now at the right hand of God the Father. He is returning again in the future at a specific date and time to this world. His feet will set down on this earth again.

We should prepare now for his return. We should prepare for the inevitable time when we will stand before his judgment seat and give account of our lives. We can prepare for this now by turning from self, sin, Satan, and this world system and by putting our entire faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Romans 10:9-10, Romans 6:23**.

1 John 1:3

Adam and Eve enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God when they were in the garden of Eden. After Adam's disobedience and the fall of man this fellowship was broken. Sin separates us from fellowship with God. When we are removed from fellowship with God we are removed from the life of God which is eternal life. What we get in the place of eternal life is eternal death.

It is God's will for us to have fellowship with him and live with him forever. It is not God's will for any man to perish. This is why the Lord Jesus came into this world and died on the cross in our place. Through his death, burial, and resurrection he made a way for us to return to a right relationship with God. Now we can draw near to God by faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus.

The apostle John saw and heard the Lord Jesus. He was there to hear the Lord Jesus teach and he saw the miracles, he witnessed the crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord Jesus. His purpose in writing this letter was so others also could have fellowship with him, with his fellow believers, and with God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ.

The only way to have a relationship which lasts forever is to base that relationship on agreement with God. By agreeing with God and putting our faith in Jesus we have a relationship and fellowship with God. After this, we can always have fellowship with others who also agree with God and believe in Jesus. For those who turn their backs on the Lord Jesus there can be no fellowship. It is not like the Christian does not desire to fellowship with his family who are unsaved. It is just practically impossible. There is no common ground. The spirit of unbelievers move in the opposite direction from the believer. There can be no fellowship. There is only superficial conversations about the temporary and fading world system.

There is no joy which can compare to fellowship with God. After this fellowship there is also no joy which can compare to genuine fellowship between believers who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

There is no joy which I have ever known like the joy of fellowship with God and with fellow believers in Christ.

1 John 1:5-7

The apostle spoke with the authority of receiving a message directly from God. What he communicated, then, was truth directly from God. What was the message? God is light.

There is no darkness in God. God is light. Those who cast doubt on God's character blaspheme someone who is completely without guilt. God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.

The words darkness and light have a moral sense and a literal sense. God is perfectly moral though his level of morality is so superior to ours it cannot be understood properly by those whose only point of reference is darkness. Our point of reference is sin and darkness. We cannot grasp the infinite light of God's goodness, holiness, and perfection.

However, we can agree with John's testimony: God is light. He is absolute. Since God is absolute light then the absolute exists. There is absolute light. There is no darkness and no compromise with this light.

Those who attempt to dampen the light of God by teaching compromise lead others astray with error. We should never compromise the truth that God is light. He is holy. He is perfect. As a result of who God is there are moral absolutes which do not change. It does not matter what men believe or do not believe. It does not matter how men may try to twist or interpret scripture. God is light. This will never change. He will never change. He will not bend or change himself to conform to the darkness of men.

Since we are prone to darkness how can we walk in the light with God? If it is impossible for us to be morally perfect how can we walk in the light? How is it possible for us not to always walk in the darkness?

We do this through agreement. We agree with God that he is light. We agree with the testimony of John. We agree. When we agree with God that he is light then we also walk in the light. It is only when we stop believing the truth about who God is that we lie and walk in darkness.

When we walk in agreement with God then we have fellowship with him and this enables us to have fellowship with one another. While we live in these fallen human bodies we are prone to temptation and sin. John addresses this in the following verses. However, human nature does not stop us from agreeing with God that he is light. We can agree with God that he is light and that he does not change. God is absolute. We take God's side against ourselves, our culture, our society, our nation, and our entire world system. We take God's side. We agree that God is light. He is absolute. Absolute exists. Then we also can walk in the light.

When we disagree with God's testimony we no longer are in the light but are now walking in the lie. We do not know the truth. When we disagree with God then fellowship with others is broken. We end up alone. Separated from everyone and from God. This is hell. Unending, unbroken darkness, isolation, and the pain that brings.

I want to walk in the light. I want to agree with God. I have made my decision to believe God's word no matter who disagrees and no matter what the entire world says. I have made my decision to walk in the light.

God is light. In him is no darkness.

1 John 1:8

Mans' capacity to deceive himself began with Adam and Eve. Eve was deceived by the serpent but afterwards deceived herself. Adam deceived himself by taking the forbidden fruit from his wife. How were they deceived and how did they deceive themselves?

They were deceived when they stopped believing the truth. The truth they knew was the word which God spoke to them: "Eat this and you will die". God is life and separation from him is death. When they disobeyed God they broke fellowship with him. When this fellowship broke they no longer had God's life but existed.

Deception and delusion go hand in hand with death. Adam and Eve attempted to minimize what they did when God confronted them. They attempted to explain what they did by pointing the finger to someone or something else. This is the lie of saying we have no sin. When we decide not to take responsibility for our own actions and decisions then we deceive ourselves. We cannot have the truth and live a lie at the same time. It is impossible.

Darkness and deception clouds the mind when we say we have not sinned. Because we have sinned. Every single one of us has sinned. We are born sinners. When we enter this world we are sinners. Read **Psalm 51:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Isaiah 64:6**.

It is not good when a Christian defends himself from correction, criticism, or accusation. Instead, we should imitate Christ when he was accused. He did not defend himself, but left all judgment to his heavenly Father.

One reason we should not defend ourselves is that it points to a symptom in the believer's heart. We are saying we have not sinned. But we have sinned. We are wrong. Only God is right. We must agree with God that he is right and we are wrong. Read **Romans 3:23**.

When we agree with what God's word says we can avoid delusion. We escape darkness and deception by agreeing with God. We are wrong and he is right. A man may feel like he is right and should defend himself but it is better not to. It is better to be quiet and allow the Lord to take care of it. Don't allow the habit of defending yourself to become part of your character and who you are. It leads to deception.

One hard thing to accept is that all men are in darkness. All men are liars. This is really hard for men to believe. It is hard to believe we can be so wrong. But we are. Without the light of God and His Word we are in complete darkness and deception.

I thank God he sent his Son into the world to shine his light and give us the truth. I am thankful for John and his testimony that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:9

Here is a promise in God's word every Christian should memorize and keep ready. This single promise from God's word saved me from my own foolishness. Many times. More than I can count. This is a precious promise in God's word.

If we confess our sins God is faithful and forgives our sins. He cleanses us from ALL unrighteousness. Praise God, he makes me clean, pure, holy. How does he do it? He listens when I confess my sins. He hears and he promises he will forgive and cleanse me.

How can God be just and yet forgive me? How can I commit sin and not pay the consequences for my sin? Because God promised he forgives me if I confess my sins. Jesus paid the price on the cross.

He does this because of what Christ Jesus did through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus made the way through his shed blood that I can be forgiven of all my sins if I simply confess them to God.

Forgiveness may not seem like a big deal to the unbeliever. However, whether or not he realizes it the unbeliever has a conscience which causes him pain. It pains him at least until he succeeds in searing it to the point he can no longer feel the pain. A believer can be relieved of the pain in his conscience by confessing his sins to God and receiving immediate forgiveness and cleansing. This is possible because of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian is free from shame and guilt of sin, failure, and mistakes. He lives life with his head held up, confident that he is clean and pure. He does not have to doubt God's love because he has this precious promise.

There are times I went back to this verse every day because of sin. Once in awhile the enemy puts the thought into my head "Don't you think God is getting tired of hearing you whine about your sin all the time?" That stopped me in my tracks and caused me a moment of dismay until I remembered the promise in **1 John 1:9**. God's word never changes. If God gave this promise then I can rest assured he never gets tired of hearing me confess my sins to him. He never fails or gives up on me. He sent his only Son Jesus to die on the cross for me! Why would he give up on me now? I refuse to listen to the lies of the devil. I am clean, I am pure, and I am made right with God. I confessed my sins to God. He forgave me and cleansed me. I have nothing to worry about.

Isn't this the greatest thing you have ever heard?

It is for me. I know how prone to failure I am and how easily I fall into sin. I know, however, when I confess my sins to God he hears and he forgives. He doesn't do this because I beg and plead with him. He does it because he said he would. He never goes back on his word and his promise.

1 John Chapter 2

1 John 2:1-2

John teaches us not to sin. We should remember Christ did not save us so we could go on in sin but instead live a righteous life. The goal is to be holy even as the Lord is holy. Read **Romans 6:1-2**.

John allowed if a man did sin it is not the end of the world. We have a way we can be made right with God again. **1 John 1:9** tells us we can confess our sins to God and receive forgiveness. John showed us how this is possible. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and he lives to make intercession for us. (**Hebrews 7:25**).

A propitiation for sins means someone purging sins. We see this presented in scripture in the sacrificial systems of Israel. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice and the final and complete sacrifice for sins. He is the propitiation for our sins. A propitiation is an atoning sacrifice. Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. He paid the price at Calvary when he was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose again on the third day demonstrating God accepted his sacrifice. He is now at the Father's right hand as our high priest forever.

Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for believers but also the sins of the whole world. The idea that Christ only died for the elect of God is exposed as error. The apostle John teaches Jesus died not only for believers but for the sins of the whole world.

We must turn away from any man-made system of theology and turn our hearts to the living God. Jesus is a real person and not a religious system or philosophy. His word is spirit and life. It is not dead religion. I've seen the effects of religion and don't want any part of it. My heart cries out for a sincere and simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is eternal life. He that has the Son of God has life.

Theology is useful for teaching the Bible but we should not put more emphasis on systems than we do upon the Lord Jesus. A vibrant love for Jesus is more important than all of our systematic theology. Every time we put God in a box he bursts out with a simple verse of scripture like this one. Jesus died for us who believe and also for the whole world who do not believe. He died for all. It is not God's will for any man to perish but that all come to repentance.

1 John 2:3-6

Obedience to commandments is often confused as a path to salvation when that is not what John or James taught us. These letters show us what a life of faith looks like. These are descriptions of a life of faith. When anyone looks at a Christian they see someone who keeps God's commandments and who does good works. Saving faith in Jesus produces the fruit of an obedient life filled with good works.

This does not mean salvation is obtained by striving to keep God's commandments or by trying to cancel sin by good works. These statements on keeping God's commandments do not provide salvation or eternal life. Instead, it shows us what a man filled with the Holy Spirit acts like.

As there was in the early church there are people who claim to be Christians in order to gain a foothold in the church for their own selfish motives. Some people like to infiltrate groups in order to gain position or prestige or monetary advantage. John says you can tell who is a genuine Christian by the fruit in their lives. Is this man obeying God's commandments? If he says he is a Christian but lives in unrepentant sin then you know he is a liar. He is not really a Christian.

A Christian lives like Jesus lived. The Christian is obedient to the heavenly Father, he is humble, he is quick to love and forgive. He is slow to anger and wrath. He is glad to help others. He loves his neighbor and his enemies. He is ready to do good. He is not overcome by evil but overcomes evil by doing good.

Jesus abides in his heavenly Father and could point to his life and works as evidence of his walk with his heavenly Father. The Christian should be able to do the same. We should by our good life testify and witness that we abide in Christ Jesus.

So there is no confusion: John does not provide the way a person earns salvation or eternal life. Instead, he demonstrates what someone who is saved acts like in their daily life.

1 John 2:9-11

John returned to the statement "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all". He showed us if we are children of God then we also live in the light of God. However, if we have our doctrine correct and we are diligent in good works but do not love our brother in Christ then we fail. It is not enough to believe the right things about God but we also must love our brother in Christ. If we do not love our brother in Christ then we are in darkness and not in light. Here we see John tied the abstract ideas of light and darkness to the practical life of the Christian in how he treats others in the church.

God is light and there is no darkness in him. This shows us absolute truth. If we have this correct and confess God is light but show indifference and apathy towards our brother then the confession is empty and hollow. Our words must match our heart and our actions. There is no room left for empty professions of faith. If a man is truly walking in the light then he also walks in love. This teaching is repeated by Paul in **1 Corinthians 13**.

John makes an interesting statement about those who walk in darkness. He said the man walking in darkness "*knoweth not whither he goeth*".

Man in pride and unbelief thinks he knows how to navigate life but he doesn't realize he is blind. He really does not know where he is going.

People who live in unbelief take their cues from the pyramid of the world system. They base their lives on survival, self interest, provision, and protecting themselves. This is easily seen in the emphasis men put on titles, position, money, and power. This is a lot of hard work.

The kingdom of God is exactly the opposite of this. The kingdom of God is about losing one's life for Jesus and the gospel. It is about being more interested in Christ than ourselves. It is about God providing for and protecting us. This is a much easier yoke to carry through life. Read **Matthew 11:28-30**.

Jesus taught about blind men who fall in a ditch. In the context Jesus spoke about this the conversation was with religious leaders of his day (**Matthew 15:14**). Blindness to motives is not constrained to those in the arenas of government or business, but also affects those serving their communities in a religious capacity. Each area of the world system infects people with the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. These diseases blind men and fill them with darkness. (Compare also **Matthew 6:22-23**).

Why would one brother hate another brother in the church? Why did Cain have hatred for Abel? We would do well to search our hearts for idolatry, covetousness, and unbelief. These are some of the roots which lead to hatred and murder.

1 John 2:15-17

The world is passing away. It is in a state of corruption and decay, like a piece of roadkill swelling up and stinking beside the highway. This world system is too far gone. There is no stopping the downward spiral of this world we live in. It is inevitable that it will wind down and disappear into the twilight of eternity.

Do I want to invest in such a world which is temporary and transient? Most people do. It is all they know so even if it is fading away they pour their heart and soul into it. It won't last. It is an investment with no return.

Mankind is in love with the transient and temporary and with the illusion of this present world system. He loves what is in it. He loves the power, the position, and the pride. The devil has deceived mankind into living for the here and now. The cry of Satan is to live your best life now. It is a lie of the devil to focus on this life and not consider the end of it all.

Read what Solomon said in **Ecclesiastes 7:2**. Also, read what Moses said in **Psalm 90:12**.

It is a good thing to meditate upon the end of life because it will be here quickly. We should use what time we have to invest in eternity and not in the transient emptiness of this present world system. The devil has so many blinded into wasting their lives and sacrificing everything at the altar of money, position, power, and pride. It is really a tragedy to think of all the men who will grow old and too late realize their lives were wasted on their lusts, on their covetousness, on their idolatry.

If we pay attention to what God's word says we learn not to love the world or the things which are in the world. The evil spirit of the world consists of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These are the three areas where the serpent hit Eve. These are also the three areas of temptation Satan attempted to seduce the Lord Jesus. These are the three areas which comprise the heart and soul of the world system.

The outward machinery of the world system is government, business, and society. I draw a parallel between these three areas and the three areas of evil and temptation. The lust of the flesh points to the area of government. The lust of the eye points to business. The pride of life points to society.

The world system is Satan's inversion of who God is. God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is Israel, church, and the kingdom. The inversion of who God Three In One is points to this world system of government, business, and society.

We are currently in the day of the church. Previously we were in the day of Israel. Soon we will be in the day of the kingdom. These are three days and they are one. None of these replaces the other for in each of these three days resides a remnant of true believers who are true Israel, the spiritual church, and the kingdom. All three are one and exist forever. However, within time are revealed chronologically and in order so we can understand who God is. These are the three persons in one God.

Remember the three elements in the ark of the covenant. "*Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's*

rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;" (Hebrews 9:4) This verse lists the three days of God: the kingdom, the church, and Israel.

Currently we are in the day of the priest and intercession. The next day which is upon us is the day of the kingdom and authority. Those who are overcomers in Christ Jesus receive the hidden manna. **(Revelation 2:17)** This hidden manna is there in the ark of the covenant. It is the third element and also the third day. It is kingdom authority.

Also in **Revelation 2:17** it describes a stone given to us with a name on it which no one knows except the Lord and the one who receives it. This speaks of a relationship with the Lord where the believer is not under any man-made system of authority. He is not under any other man's name anymore. He is free to serve the Lord Jesus alone. He only responds when he hears the Lord call his name. Have you ever heard Jesus call your name?

The world system cheats a man out of the hidden manna and it cheats a man out of receiving a name from the Lord. Instead, the world system teaches a man to use the power of the world system, which is building one's own name and seducing people into submitting to one's own name through money and manipulation. The world system teaches a man to exalt himself and his own name or the name of his business. This is the path of darkness and leads away from the kingdom of God.

Don't invest in this present world system which is passing away. Instead, invest in what will count for eternity. Invest life, energy, and heart into the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in sharing the good news to as many who will listen.

1 John 2:18

You have heard Antichrist shall come. I heard this from my early childhood and not just at church or in Sunday School. My father took me to movies a lot when I was a child and one movie we saw was about a young boy who grew up to become the Antichrist. That movie freaked me out. It impressed me that there was this mystery I should look into.

Eventually I discovered that the Bible taught that a man will arise in his own name and the entire world will follow him. He comes in his own name. That is a clue to what kind of man he is and what kind of spirit drives him. Paul taught about this Antichrist and also the Lord Jesus mentioned him. Read **John 5:43**.

Scripture passages where Paul mentions Antichrist are in **2 Thessalonians: 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8-12**.

These scriptures paint a specific picture of this Antichrist man of sin. Also, the book of revelation has a lot to say about him as well. Read **Revelation 13:1-9**.

These are not the only places in the Bible that refer to the Antichrist. He is also described in Daniel's prophecies of the last days. There is no doubt that as we approach the end of this age the Antichrist and the world system will rise. I believe we are seeing a surge in the rise of this system right now like never before in history. It cannot be much longer until this man of sin takes the world stage.

However, I am not looking for Antichrist to come. Instead, I am waiting for the return of my King, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Lord will destroy this Antichrist when he returns in power and glory. That is the day I am looking forward to. The days of this world system and its Antichrist are short lived indeed.

My prayer is for God's kingdom to come upon this earth, and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

1 John 2:22-23

Anyone who denies the Father and Son is a liar and an Antichrist. Jesus Christ is God's Son. Sadly, the majority of the world, including most religions, deny the Son of God. Some religions make a real point of denying God has a Son. They write it on their temples and proclaim it on a regular basis. Anyone who dies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a liar and an Antichrist.

If someone denies that Jesus Christ is the only way to God then they are a liar and an Antichrist. People who deny that Jesus Christ is the only way to God are liars and Antichrists. If anyone agrees with these liars they also are liars and Antichrists.

We must verbally, vocally, and forcefully rebuke and correct anyone who says Jesus Christ is just one way to God. He is the only way to God! He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**)

If someone denies the Father and the Son, no matter how much they talk about God, they do not know him.

Jesus confronted people who claimed to know God but did not.

People pretend to be religious but if they do not believe Jesus is the only way to God then they have no clue who God is.

Liars are not just liars because they tell a lie. People don't just tell lies. They are living a lie. Their life is a lie. They are controlled by the lie of the devil. They are held in bondage to the lie because they have rejected the truth.

As soon as a person rejects the truth they immediately accept the lie. There is the truth and there is the lie.

What awaits anyone who denies the truth of Jesus Christ is hellfire. People hate to hear about where they are going. They do not believe it. Of course they don't believe it. They are walking in darkness and in the lie. Only someone walking in the light and in agreement with God can believe the truth.

The truth cannot be understood by an unbeliever. When someone told me they read the Bible and did not understand it I replied, "Of course you don't! You cannot understand the Bible unless you stand under it. You must be willing to submit to the truth before you can understand it."

Here are some scriptures to help with this: **2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 1 Corinthians 2:14.**

We still live today in a time of God's grace. We are in the valley of decision. People can still repent and find the truth of God.

However, a horrible time is coming when all those who have not received a love of the truth believe a great delusion. There is a great delusion and lie coming which will ensnare the entire world.

I'm seeing this lie unfold in America. How close are we until the end? I ask this question a lot these days. Read **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**.

Decide once and for all that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. Don't turn aside anymore to false religions and systems of philosophy which deny Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Do not listen to the lie that there are other ways to God and other ways to be happy and successful in life. You may be happy right now but what about eternity? It will be here before you know it.

1 John 2:24-25

What they heard from the beginning was the plain gospel: Jesus was crucified and shed his blood for our sins. He died, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. He ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God. He lives there forever making intercession for us. He is returning again at some definite point in the future to this earth. The gospel is this: Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. Read **Romans 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

Notice John uses the word "if". He says "if" you continue to abide in what you have heard from the beginning. If a man keeps in his heart and mind the gospel then he continues to be in Christ and in the Father. However, what happens if a man forgets? What happens if he neglects this great salvation? What happens? In my experience, God has been gracious to keep reminding me and drawing me back. The Lord corrects me many times to bring me back to remembering his message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Is it possible to refuse to listen to God's correction? We know from scripture it is possible for men to stop listening to God and turn away. We see this throughout scripture where men who once knew God turned away from him. Some of them God was able to correct and bring back. Others hardened their hearts when they were corrected and would not listen.

From my understanding the key to abiding and continuing in Christ is to be willing to receive correction from the Holy Spirit and from scripture. This is a grace from God also. Man is naturally resistant and rebellious towards correction. However, over time I've learned to appreciate correction and rebuke from him. Now I understand it is a sign of God's love for me when he convicts, corrects, and rebukes me.

The only way to continue to abide in the word of Christ is to accept the "hard" word when it comes. Beginning at **John 8:31** read carefully the conversation which Jesus has with those who were following him.

He tells them, *"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed..."*

Continuing in the word of Christ means accepting what Jesus is saying right now, at this moment, today. It does not mean what you accepted years ago at an altar.

What are you accepting right now, today? Who are you agreeing with? Are you in agreement with unbelievers? Then you have stopped abiding and continuing in God's word.

As soon as you turn away from the plain word of God which you already know then you have stopped abiding. You have ceased to continue.

Jesus called those who followed him the children of the devil because they did not accept his word at that moment. When Peter did not receive the word that the Lord would go to the cross then Jesus rebuked him and said "get behind me Satan". When we reject the word of the Lord Jesus we immediately become subject to Satan. If you reject the word of truth then you have automatically accepted the word of the liar. Read **John 8:44-47**.

When we deliberately disobey God's word which we previously acknowledged as truth then we betray the Lord Jesus. You cannot separate God's word from the person of the Lord Jesus. He is the word of God.

To continue in the Lord Jesus we must accept his word. We must abide in the gospel which we heard when we were saved. We were saved by believing the gospel. We must continue to believe the gospel every day. We cannot neglect this great salvation. We cannot decide to take a day off from being a Christian.

Especially in the season we are currently living in it is vital to stay all the way on the Lord's side. Compromise a little and the aggressive evil in society will sweep you away. There is a riptide of evil which is pulling people right and left out into an ocean of darkness. It will continue to worsen until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **2 Timothy 3:1-5**.

We are living in the last day described by Paul. It is here. Now is the time to remember the word from the Lord Jesus Christ in **Luke 21:28**. Lord Jesus, return to us quickly.

1 John 2:26-27

I worked at a ministry teaching new Christians. I remember a student came up to me outside class and gave me this scripture: "*ye need not that any man teach you*".

I realized what he was implying by showing me this. He didn't need me to teach him anything. He was probably five years older than me and had a hard time accepting someone younger instructing him. I understood his feelings and was at a loss for words to explain this to him properly so I just let it go. I continued to pray for him and for God to show me how to help him.

Finally the Lord showed me the following verses: **Ephesians 4:11-13**. I'm happy to say when I showed this scripture to him he received it graciously and we became good friends.

Scripture always helps us to understand scripture. By comparing scriptures and also by putting scripture in the right context we have a better understanding of what the Holy Spirit is teaching us. John did not say teachers are not needed in the church. Was he not himself teaching them through this letter? In the context of John's letter he said this because he was warning them about false teachers who

were attempting to seduce them and lead them astray from the gospel they were originally taught by the apostles.

He wrote these things because of those who were trying to seduce the church. As Christians we have the Holy Spirit and God's word. We should never take what any man says without verifying and cross checking it against the Bible and what the Holy Spirit teaches us. If what a preacher says does not line up with the Bible we know the man is a false teacher.

The Bible commended the Bereans for searching the scriptures daily to see if what Paul preached was true. Read **Acts 17:11**. The Holy Spirit is our primary teacher. He instructs us in the word of God. We listen to him as he teaches us. Jesus said the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth and brings back to our mind everything Jesus said. Read **John 14:26**.

Since the beginning there were seducers infiltrating the church with false teaching. Some become powerful with positions in mega churches. We do not receive anything men say without searching the Bible for ourselves. We ask the Lord to show us if what men teach is true or not. By staying humble and accepting correction we can avoid deception.

The anointing John mentioned was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in a believer's life is the anointing. The word "anointing" is abused in American churches by people who emphasize the Holy Spirit in Bible teaching. We should not throw out the truth of the anointing just because some in the church abuse this word. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is real. It enables us to learn the truth and to abide in the truth. The anointing of the Holy Spirit enables us to be humble and teachable. It helps us keep an open heart when corrected by God's word. It is the secret strength of the Christian who walks in victory.

Since we live in a time when there are deceivers we should pay attention to First John. We should remember not to love the world. We should remember to love our brothers and sisters in Christ with a pure heart. We need to remember to confess our sins and receive cleansing and forgiveness from the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep in mind the facts of the gospel message: Jesus died for our sins, according to the scriptures. He was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

1 John 2:28-29

Jesus shall appear. He will return to earth. John taught in his letter that we need to abide in Christ so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed at his return.

It is crucial to understand what it means to abide in Christ.

Confidence and a lack of guilt springs from a clean conscience. When does the conscience become painful? When you fall into sin. We have a way to deal with the sin problem. We confess our sins to the Lord and he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. **1 John 1:9**.

There is also the experience of daily righteous living. We cannot earn salvation by good works. However, a life filled with God's Spirit produces good works. It is daily life close to the Lord which results in a life of righteousness.

Obedience to the Holy Spirit is abiding in Christ. Committing sin breaks our fellowship with the Lord. Living free from sin and communing with the Lord Jesus is abiding. When he appears we can say to

him, "I was just talking to you this morning! I was looking forward to our time this evening in prayer and in Bible study, but here you are! Hallelujah, now we can be with each other all the time!"

A man who is born again lives a righteous life. He lives a righteous life because his heavenly Father is righteous. Anyone who continues to live in disobedience and disregard toward God's word shows he is not born again. Even a child is known by his actions. Read **Proverbs 20:11**.

How often do we ponder the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is an event which should occupy the mind of the believer every day. The Lord could return at any time. Do we believe this? His return is imminent. There is nothing which could stop him from returning today. Let us live in view of this. Let us meditate on this and cultivate in our life a fear of the Lord. We do not want to be ashamed when he returns. Instead, we want to run out to meet him with our arms wide open.

When is the Lord appearing? We do not know. We have information about the season of his return. The world will be like it was during the time before Noah's flood. Read **Luke 17:26-30**.

The revelation of Jesus Christ happens suddenly and people do not expect it. This speaks to the idea of an imminent return. It happens suddenly and quickly.

We should discipline ourselves to live each day in view of eternity. We should invest ourselves in what will matter a thousand years from now. What will matter in a thousand years?

"Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life's busy way; Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart; Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last." --C.T. Studd.

1 John Chapter 3

1 John 3:1

A man who is loved by God and called by God a son is unknown to the world. Those who live in the world do not know a man who is called a son of God. Those who are sons of God do not fit in with the world system and are not understood by those who abide in the world system.

An unbeliever lives according to the world system by living for self first. He loves himself and declares his love for self in word and in action and attitude. His mind is set on his own survival, happiness, provision, and protection. His prize is what he can build and acquire in this world system. This kind of man does not understand or even like the man whose mind is set on the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience, and denying self.

The son of God is looked on by the world as foolish and weak. This is exactly how the Lord told us it would be, and is exactly what we see in the life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He was crucified in weakness but raised by the power of God.

In the same way the sons of God appear to the world as weak when they deny self and live for God. This son of God does not appear to be concerned about self interest. Instead his mind is up in the clouds thinking about spiritual things. Is he no earthly good? Actually, a spiritual man is a lot of earthly

good. Among the sons of God one can find the most practical and useful men anywhere. They are the salt of the earth.

The world cannot understand a son of God because it did not understand the Son of God. They rejected Jesus vehemently and nailed him to a cross. In the same way the world treats those who follow the Savior.

Since the world persecuted the Lord Jesus they also persecute Christians. Read 2 Timothy 3:12.

We are called not only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but also to walk in his footsteps and endure trials in a similar fashion as he did. Read **Philippians 1:29**.

When we find people who hate us simply because we are Christians then we need to remember the world hated Christ first. Since they hated the Lord Jesus they will also hate us. Read John 15:18-19.

The world did not know the Lord Jesus and his own people, the nation of Israel, for the most part rejected him as their Messiah. Read **John 1:10-13**.

We are made sons of God when we are born again. We are now in God's family. The world does not understand Christians and they persecute and hate the Christian. This is the way it was ever since our Lord Jesus walked on this earth.

Don't think the path is easy but it is a path which leads to increasing knowledge of our heavenly Father. It leads us from this temporary life into an eternal home with our heavenly Father.

1 John 3:2-3

Our heavenly Father calls us his sons. We are sons of God. We have no idea what that means in the future. We will become somebody much different than we are living in this weak human body. We will receive a body like the Lord Jesus. We will receive a resurrected body! I'm looking forward to this. I am tired of this aging body.

When he appears we shall be like him. This speaks of the resurrection of the saints at the rapture. This is what Paul described in **1 Corinthians 15:51-52**.

What a wonderful promise in these scriptures! For the man looking for the appearance of Jesus he experiences a purifying effect on his life. If there is no other reason to preach the return of the Lord Jesus this is it. Preaching about the appearance of the Lord Jesus purifies people. It brings soberness to our Christian walk. We see how shallow the prosperity message is. That is a shallow message. The prosperity gospel is like moldy crumbs compared to the fresh bread of the return of the Lord.

This is our blessed hope: the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Read **Titus 2:13**.

What will it be like to see the Lord Jesus? After hearing his voice I can see the ocean of change which needs to happen in my life between now and the appearing of the Lord. We can rest assured he will change us. He will make us so we can be in his presence and so we can glorify him forever. Hallelujah, I can't wait!

1 John 3:8

John taught that Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus taught us what the works of the devil are. Read **John 10:10**.

Jesus came to destroy the devil's work of destruction. He came into this world so those dying in their sin could have eternal life. He came to give us life and life more abundantly.

The Lord Jesus reverses the work of the devil. Where the devil stole life from us the Lord Jesus gives us life.

The Lord Jesus restores the wasted years of life. We should not always regret the failure and sin of the past. All of that is under the blood of Jesus.

We do not need to be afraid of the future. Our future in Christ Jesus is secure. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus touched the leper and cleansed him. He opened the eyes of the blind. He caused the crippled to stand up straight and walk. He spoke to the dead and raised him out of the grave.

He is the alpha and the omega. He is the beginning and the end. He is the resurrection and the life. In him we have life! Praise God for his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

He came and preached the good news to poor people. He walked among us. We touched him and he touched us. One woman grabbed the hem of his robe and was healed. Where he walked demons fled and devils ran away.

He went to Calvary and gave himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sin. He was mocked, ridiculed, spat on, rejected, scorned, beaten. They made him carry his cross. His head was pierced with a crown of thorns.

Through blood, sweat, tears, and agony he gave his life at Calvary. He is and forever will be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world. He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

When I think on what the Lord did for me I cannot help but cry. I cry with great sorrow over my life and so much thankfulness in my heart to the Lord Jesus. I am so thankful and glad for him. He is my life now. There is nothing and nobody else but the Lord Jesus.

1 John 3:17-18

The spiritual man is a practical man. The Christian is sometimes accused by those who do not know any better of keeping his head in the clouds. A Christian life is more than abstract concepts about love and spirituality. John taught us that a man who loves God will demonstrate love by helping his brother. A brother in need is an opportunity for the Spirit filled Christian. A brother in need is an opportunity to obey God's word and demonstrate love for God and our brother.

John directed his instructions to the brother who had "this world's good". He spoke directly to the Christian who had his needs met. This brother has a home, transportation, food, clothing, and medical care. How can he not help his brother who is in need? Don't forget part of having this world's good may mean particular skills and talents which can be used to help others. Sometimes it is not money but skills and time that is needed to help someone.

A lack of compassion means to harden one's heart against someone in need. If you know someone in your church who is a Christian and is in need then do not look the other way. Find out how you can help. Don't ignore a brother in need.

It feels like this is harder for people today because we are trained by the world system to ignore people. No one pays attention except to their cell phone, computer, and entertainment. We should focus on people around us, not just on feeding ourselves with more information. What are the needs of people around us?

Don't just talk about the Christian life but find ways to put faith into action by helping others. Become sensitive to people in the church who need help.

1 John Chapter 4

1 John 4:1-3

Demons are not above using the name of Jesus Christ to deceive Christians. They can and do use the name of Jesus to deceive people into following a false Christ, a false spirit, and a false gospel. Entire religious movements in America were started and maintained by taking the name of Jesus Christ and changing the meaning of his name into something different.

How do we determine if the Jesus people talk about is the same Jesus in the Bible? Do they add or take away from him? Read the New Testament and you find out Jesus Christ is God who came in the flesh and lived among us.

An evil spirit will attempt to deny Jesus was a man or that Jesus was God in the flesh. They will not deny he is real but will minimize him into being only a teacher, prophet, or a healer. They will deny that he is God or they will deny that he was a man. If anyone denies the deity of Jesus or denies the humanity of Jesus then you have a false Jesus.

The word Antichrist simply means "in the place of Christ". The enemy does not deny the Lord Jesus. Instead, the enemy deceives people into trusting a counterfeit Christ. The enemy wants to construct a counterfeit who might be ninety percent like the Christ in the Bible but there will be ten percent which is a lie. This is how the enemy operates. The enemy patronizes the gospel and Jesus but replaces the real gospel and the real Jesus with a counterfeit. Most people accept a counterfeit Jesus over the real Jesus because a fake Jesus does not challenge their sin. The false Jesus does not convict them of sin. A false Jesus makes people feel good in their sin. He does not rebuke their pride.

We are commanded to "try the spirits". There are many false prophets teaching false gospels, creating a counterfeit Jesus, and building ministries reaching thousands of people with lies. I wonder if there was a time in history when man was so saturated with lies as it is right now?

Testing spirits is not difficult for born again sons of God. Ask discerning questions. Don't take anything at face value. Remember the world is in the power of the wicked. Remember the true Jesus does not encourage a life of sin, pride, and wickedness. If you meet "Christians" who compromise on hot topics such as abortion or homosexuality then beware. If you dig deep enough you will find this person is a false Christian and believes a false Jesus.

The Antichrist spirit is working in the world. It was active during the time of the first apostles. It is active in the current world system. John said this spirit was active then, but indicated something more intense in the future. The Antichrist spirit finds its fulfillment in a man of sin who blasphemes God and takes over the world with lies of peace.

Be diligent to stay in the truth and to abide in God's word continually. We need to stay in prayer, stay in the word, and ask God to correct us and keep us humble. True disciples of Jesus deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him. They do not follow self. They follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't be afraid of demons or evil spirits. Scripture promises us if we submit to God and resist the devil he will flee from us. (**James 4:7**). The word promises us in **1 John 4:4**, "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" We have the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ and are more than conquerors in his name.

1 John 4:4-6

Who is the "them" John referred to? If we examine these verses in context we see John pointed at false prophets. John said true Christians are of God and overcome these false prophets. How? Why? Because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We overcome the false prophets and the demons behind those false prophets because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Those who listen to false prophets abide in the world system. They listen to false prophets because they do not have the Holy Spirit. They listen to false prophets because they accept the lie. They live according to the lie and the devil. Everyone who is not a born again Christian is in agreement with the devil.

I know this sounds radical so I will give scriptures to prove this point. Read **Ephesians 2:1-3**. By the way, the "*prince of the power of the air*" referred to is the serpent (devil, Satan, Lucifer). If that is not enough to convince you here's another scripture: **1 John 5:19**.

Jesus touched on this principle of men not being able to hear him because they did not abide in God but were instead living in the devil's system. Read **John 8:43-47**.

I have personally witnessed what Jesus was describing. I have talked to people and told them the gospel truth and they said they did not understand it. Now this complaint of not understanding the gospel or the Bible does not come from a lack of explanation. Basically, someone who refuses to stand under God cannot understand God. They do not understand God's word because they refuse to stand under God's word. They do not submit to God's word because they are unbelievers. They choose the world system instead of God's word. They abide in the world system and cannot understand God's word. Only a man who is of God hears God's word.

1 John 4:14-15

Having a biblical framework for thinking instead of man-made systems will exclude ideas like "Christ is only the Savior of the elect". Right here in the Bible it is written that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. All those unbelieving people out there comprise the target of the gospel. The gospel is not just for the elect. This Savior did not just die for a small group of people. He is the Savior of the world.

John said "we have seen". Not only did John see the Lord Jesus. There were other apostles as well who saw the Lord Jesus Christ. They heard his teaching, they watched his miracles, they observed his humility, and they witnessed his obedience to his heavenly Father. They saw him stretch himself out on a cross and allow himself to be nailed to it. They saw him die on that cross. They saw him after he rose from the dead. He met with them, spoke with them, ate food with them. He invited Thomas to touch him and believe in him. They knew for a fact this same Jesus is Lord and He is God. No doubt about it.

Here is an interesting word "whosoever". We've heard this word before in John's gospel. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here are some more "whosoever" verses: **John 4:14, John 11:26, John 12:46, Acts 2:21, Acts 10:43, Romans 10:11-13**. After reading all those verses I hope that no one still believes that Jesus is only the Savior of the elect.

Whosoever will believe in the Son of God who was sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world can and will be saved. It is as simple as believing that Jesus is the Son of God.

When we believe this we automatically reject every man who tells us that Jesus is less than God. We automatically reject every liar who attempts to bring down Jesus to the level of just any other prophet or healer. We reject the lies of society which tell us that Jesus and his church is no different than Islam or Buddhism or any other false, pagan religion. Those who promote these lies are of their father the devil and the works of their father they will do. Satan's most effective weapon to deceive mankind is counterfeit religion.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. No one will ever take his place. There will be a man who will try to take his place. He will attempt to take the place of Christ but he will soon be exposed as the beast that he is.

Let us not attempt to put God in a box. Let us realize once and for all that we can believe God's word without systematizing it to death. Let us embrace God's word with humility, believe it, trust in it, rely on it every single day. This Savior of the world will not fail us. He is returning again soon just like he said that he would.

1 John 4:18

The first question which comes to my mind when I read this verse: what kind of "fear" is John referring to? The reason I ask that question is because there are other verses in the Old and New Testament which encourage believers to fear God.

Here is a sample of other scriptures that encourage us to fear God: **Exodus 18:21, Joshua 24:14, Psalms 19:9, Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 14:26, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:5, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:21, Hebrews 12:28.**

After reading these verses I hope we realize the word "fear" which John used in our text does not mean we should be against the "fear" of God.

I've heard people really twist and mangle this verse and say we should not preach and teach about fearing God. They always quote this verse as a proof text that we should not teach people to fear God. However, if they read their entire Bible and not just this one proof text they would realize how silly their position is.

Of course we are supposed to fear God. The fear of God is the most wonderful thing a man can ever experience in his life. To know the reality and feel the tangible presence of God himself should be a terrifying experience for anyone. Everybody I see in the Bible who came close to God fell on their face, passed out, or turned away their face from the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a good thing. It cleanses us. It changes us.

But that was not what John was talking about. John was talking about a tormenting, demonic fear which causes anxiety and stress. This is fear which the enemy tries to put into people so they do not trust in God. John taught us we should realize how much God loves us so we will not give in to the lies of the devil. We need to reject the tormenting fears which the enemy tries to put on believers.

I know there are some areas in my life where I have some irrational fears. I get shaky with heights and also have a problem driving over bridges. These are areas I am determined by God's grace to overcome and not let control me.

Irrational fears are a sign of a lack of trust in God's love. This tormenting, demonic fear hinders us from growing into the man or woman of God we should be.

Remember the exhortation Paul gave to Timothy: **2 Timothy 1:7.**

1 John Chapter 5

1 John 5:4-5

One area of victory which Jesus won for us through his death, burial, and resurrection is overcoming the world system.

John already described for us the parts of this world system earlier in chapter 2: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

The outward machinery of the world system is government, business, and society. The majority of Christians find themselves employed and living within one of these realms. There are individuals who do not fit in the world system at all, those who are gifts to the church and labor in the word and in prayer. For the most part, however, Christians live within the world infrastructure of government, business, and society. Even though we live and work within this system we are to resist being infected

by the attitude of the world system. The underlying soul of the world system is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

If a Christian will consistently exercise victory over the world system he needs to understand what Christ has done for us. He needs to comprehend that God the Father has placed us into Christ Jesus and united us together with him in death, burial, and resurrection. This unity with Christ deals a death blow to the "self" life, which is the lock on the door of the world system prison. If we are set free from the self life then we also are free from the world system. Some Christians are forgiven for their sins but do not realize their freedom in Christ from walking according to the world system. We are now free to live our life in harmony with the Kingdom of God and not with the world system.

The world system can be characterized as a pyramid with those holding the highest positions, prestige, and power at the very top.

The kingdom of God is the opposite of this. Jesus who is God came into this world as a man and washed the feet of his disciples. He humbled himself and was obedient to the death of the cross. This shows the kingdom of God is exactly opposite of the world system. In the world system Jesus would have been at the top of the pyramid. However, in the kingdom of God the Lord himself took the lowest place and humbled himself. By doing this he showed us the kingdom of God is completely unlike anything we have known in the world system we currently live in.

I remember visiting a prison where I had an opportunity to share my testimony. I have never in my life felt the anointing of the Holy Spirit like I did in that prison. Why would the presence of God be so strong in a church service in a prison? Because the Holy Spirit touches lives when hearts are humble. The Holy Spirit can move in a place where men are not hung up on titles, positions, names, and power. When we humble ourselves and do away with all of the Reverend So-and-So talk then perhaps God will move in our church.

I've only touched on what John described as the "pride of life". This evil is manifest strongly in the area of the world machinery known as "society". Society includes every individual in a city, state, or nation. It also includes those who serve the people in that community. Notice how those who "serve" in the community always have the most prestigious titles: doctors, lawyers, etc. Any person whose career is serving the community usually relies on the power of their name and reputation. These people are the most susceptible to the pride of life.

How do we overcome the world system? By faith in the Son of God. By our unity with the Son of God we are free from the world system. The Holy Spirit helps us see this pride, covetousness, idolatry, and lust. He gives us discernment if we humble ourselves, obey the voice of the Lord, and turn away from self. We must deny our self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. By doing this we find the life which God promised us, which is eternal life, a life that lasts forever.

1 John 5:12

Here is a succinct and efficient summary of the gospel. He that has Jesus has life. He that does not have Jesus does not have life. There is no in-between when it comes to eternal life or eternal damnation. You are either with Jesus or you are against him. He does not leave room for anyone to be neutral or indifferent. We make a choice for him or against him, one way or another.

This includes those who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. You would be hard pressed to find someone in today's interconnected world but I'm sure there are still people on this planet who have not heard of Jesus and the gospel. If they die in their sins will they be lost and go to hell?

Let me repeat what the Bible says: If you have the Son of God you have life. If you do not have the Son of God you do not have life.

Don't think God is unjust in making only one way to be saved. He is just. It would be just if God sent every single man, woman, and child to an eternal lake of fire. We are all fallen, lost, and born in sin. It is God's grace that anyone is saved at all.

If your heart still rebels at God when you hear this then you show your own nature. You are a rebel against God. No matter how much you shake your fist at God you will feel the fist of his justice sooner or later. You can argue and debate but at the end there will only be one thing that matters. Do you have the Lord Jesus? Or did you reject him? That is all that will matter.

It does not matter if you say you do not believe. I can say all day long I don't believe this or that and it does not change facts. There is an objective reality outside of us which does not depend on whether or not we believe.

These are facts. Do you have the Son of God? Or have you rejected him? You will eternally thank God or you will for eternity curse his name. The choice is ours to make.

I have chosen to get totally on the Lord's side. I call on the name of Jesus and trust in him to take away my sins through the blood he shed on the cross at Calvary. I trust in him as my Savior, as my Lord, and as my King. He is my life now and forever.

1 John 5:14-15

A man might wonder if God hears his prayers or if God answers his prayers. John gives us a method we can know for sure God hears prayers and answers prayers.

Ask in prayer according to God's will. Let what one asks in prayer be according to who God is.

This requires a man have a relationship with God and know God. How can you know something is God's will unless you know who God is?

We want God to hear our prayers. Is it possible we can pray and God never hears the prayer? Read **Psalms 66:18**. How does a man regard iniquity in his heart? If a man is not willing to deal with known sin in his life and ask for God to cleanse him then there is little hope God hears his prayers. About the only prayer God hears from a man like this is a prayer of repentance and asking God to forgive him. If he asks God to forgive him then he no longer regards iniquity in his heart. To regard iniquity is to hold on to it. He has no intention of letting go of his sin if he regards it in his heart. When he has no intention of laying iniquity down then God does not hear his prayers.

The goal in prayer is to be heard by God. Why spend time praying to God unless you want him to hear your prayers?

Men have various motives for praying. Jesus said some people want to be seen and heard by other men when they pray. If this is the motive then the only one hearing the prayer is the one praying it. Maybe some unfortunate soul in his vicinity will also hear his hot air.

If a man wants God to hear his prayer he will pray according to God's will. One way to learn how to pray according to God's will is to examine prayers in the Bible. There are a multitude of prayers in the Bible we can study. One of the most important prayers is the example the Lord Jesus gave his disciples. Read **Luke 11:1-4**. Here we see a pattern for praying according to God's will. Other examples of prayers were those which Paul prayed in his letters. He told people what he prayed for, how he prayed, and how often he prayed.

Prayer is a primary function of the church. We are called to proclaim God's word and to intercede in prayer. We need to pray for the church and also pray for the lost.

The Bible gives specific instructions to never cease praying, never give up, and to engage in prayer as if one is in warfare. Prevailing prayer defeats the work of the devil and is a necessary part of Christian service to God.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Pray that the Lord will send workers into the harvest field to seek and save those who are lost. Pray for government and leaders of our nation, state, and local government. Pray the Lord will give us men who will lead in righteousness and according to biblical principles. We need to pray for revival in the church, for missionaries, pastors, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers in the church. We need to pray that these gifts to the church will be diligent to use their gifts to edify and build up of the church. Pray we will not be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our mind in God's word. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

We need to let our conversation be filled with grace, seasoned with salt. Pray the Lord will set a watch and guard over one's mouth that only what is good and edifying will come out. Let us pray that the word of our mouth and the meditations of our heart will be pleasing to the Lord.

Pray you can bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ and cast down every vain imagination. Pray and put on the full armor of God each day. Plead the blood of Jesus over your life, your family, and your neighbors. Pray for your enemies. Pray you will not be overcome by evil by overcome evil by doing what is good. Pray that the peace of Christ Jesus will reign in your heart.

There is a lot to pray for and much we can pray according to God's word. Remember to stay in the word and to stay in prayer always.

1 John 5:19

The New Testament teaches about what is called "the world". If we read the New Testament and underline those passages where the world is mentioned we can get a picture in our minds of what "the world" really is.

I heard about this for years and knew about it but only after I received revelation from the Lord did I truly understand the importance of this. There is a clear distinction drawn in scripture between the world and the kingdom of God.

A man is a citizen of the world system because he inherits a sinful nature from his earthly forefather Adam. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden they stopped living according to God's life and started living a self-centered life. They hid from God and tried to cover themselves with vegetation. Already in the beginning we see man's attempt at covering himself with his own efforts.

From these first steps into sin and death man built an entire world system independent from the life of God. Man turned his back on the Tree of Life and instead embraced the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

This world system is built on the foundation of the pride of life, the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye. This is the soul and foundation of the world system we live in to this current day.

Jesus taught his disciples the kingdom of God is completely opposite of the world system. He told them the Gentiles had titles, positions, and names they called themselves. But in the church we are not to do this. We are not to call people by a title in a system of hierarchy. The hierarchy system of the pyramid is the principle of the world system. Those with the big names are at the top.

In God's kingdom it is opposite from the world system. In God's kingdom those who are the least are the greatest. Those who are great are those who have the smallest names or no name at all. They are servants to everyone else. This is a radical departure from the way the world thinks and operates.

Everyone who abides in the world system is an enemy of God. Those who love the world hate God and are enemies of God. There is no compromise, no middle ground, no in-between ground. Forget about getting on the fence because there is no fence. There is either God's kingdom or the world system.

When men choose to believe the word of the serpent and eat this poisonous fruit he became one in essence, principle, and goal as Satan. This is what is meant by our text today: "the world lieth in wickedness."

If a man is not born again of the Spirit of God he is dead in his trespasses and sins. He is a dead man walking and talking. The "death" the Bible speaks of primarily is spiritual death. Spiritual death is to be separated from God who is eternal life. Jesus said eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom God sent into the world. (**John 17:3**). To be separated from Jesus and the Father is to be dead in sin.

This is repeated by the apostle Paul in **Ephesians 2:1-3**, "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*"

The outward machinery of the world system is government, business, and society. John's list of spiritual qualities in the world parallel the outward machinery. The lusts of the flesh parallels government. The lusts of the eye parallels business. The pride of life parallels society.

The opposite of the world system is the Kingdom of God: Israel, church, and the kingdom. Also, the roles which parallel these are prophet, priest, and king. Through this we understand and see who God

is. The glory of God is reflected through the "three in one" paradigm of Israel, church, and the kingdom. God is reflected in the "three in one" paradigm of prophet, priest, and king. These are all three in one. Now you can understand how the world system is such a counterfeit and rip off of who God is. Government, business, and society is an upside down copy of the prophet, priest, and king. It is also the opposite of Israel, church, and the kingdom. The Lord showed this to me in August 2014 and I've never forgotten this. The more I study the Bible the more I see clearly how all of this fits together. It is so important for us to come out of the world system and live according to the kingdom of God.

Jesus prayed, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* (**John 17:15**).

Through this prayer we understand as Christians we continue working within the framework of the world system. This outward framework is government, business, and society. However, Jesus prayed for us to be kept from "the evil". This evil is the spirit behind the world system. This evil is manifested in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life.

It is important for Christians to pray and ask God for real understanding of these three areas so we can be wise in avoiding temptation. If we look closely we will see the devil employs these three areas when he tempted Eve and also when he tempted the Lord Jesus Christ.

People tend to be tempted more strongly in one area depending on where they work in the world system. If a man serves society in his profession he is most likely to be tempted with the pride of life. If a man works in government he will be sorely tempted with the lusts of the flesh. If someone is a business leader he will be tempted with the lusts of the eye. We are continuously tempted in all of these areas, but wherever we work in the world system greatly affects us. We should learn to overcome in whatever place we are in.

Remember God's promise to us in **1 John 4:4**, *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* Who is "he that is in the world"? The "he" refers to those who are mouthpieces for the evil spirit. We have overcome them because the Holy Spirit lives within us. The "he" is the spirit of Antichrist, or the devil.

The Lord makes a way for us to escape temptation. Read **1 Corinthians 10:13**. Also, a very simple scripture to keep in mind when engaged in spiritual warfare is **James 4:7**, "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

The Second Epistle of John

2 John Chapter 1

2 John 1:7

John repeats what he said in 1 John. Anyone who adds to the Lord Jesus or takes anything away from him is a deceiver and an Antichrist. People attempt in different ways to deny the humanity or the deity of the Lord Jesus. Both denials lead to error and deception. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is the God Man.

There are many deceivers. There are too many deceivers to keep up with. I see ministries who do their best to list and keep up with cults and false religions. I understand the purpose of what they are attempting but I think there is a better method to help people with discernment. I think the best way to arm people against deceivers is to saturate ourselves with the truth.

One scripture which points to this is **2 Thessalonians 2:10**. Here we see the way to avoid deception is to receive the love of the truth. It is not enough to acknowledge the truth. We must love the truth.

We must love the truth more than we love ourselves. The reason we must love the truth intensely like this is because the truth condemns our sinfulness. We are sinful by nature and by birth. The truth condemns us. We must take the side of the truth against ourselves. The only way to do this is to receive the love of the truth. We must love the truth even when it strikes us down. This is impossible unless God's grace moves in the heart of the believer.

We can pray and ask God to give us this love of the truth. I would make this a priority in our prayers to God. Ask the Lord to help us to love the truth more than we love ourselves. Our ability to escape deception and delusion depend upon this love of the truth.

I've known people who acknowledge the truth and make a profession of faith. As I walk alongside them for awhile, however, I notice when the truth convicts them they take their own side. They defend themselves against the truth. When I see this I know the person does not love the truth. They give lip service to the truth but they do not love the truth. Only a man who humbles himself when the truth strikes him truly loves the truth.

Who is the truth? Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. (**John 14:6**). He is truth. The word he speaks is spirit and life. (**John 6:63**). Jesus Christ himself is truth. When he speaks the words which come from him are truth. He is absolute truth.

I find the conversation Jesus had with Pilate interesting within the context of what we are looking at here. Read **John 18:37-38**.

Everyone who is of the truth hears the voice of the Lord. Do we want to hear the voice of God? Then get completely on the Lord's side. Ask him to give us a love of the truth so even when we are condemned by the truth we still take the side of truth.

This is a decision we make. Will we abide in the truth? Will we abide in the truth when the entire world says the truth is a lie and the lie is the truth? That is what is happening right now. Men call what is evil good and what is good they call evil. What side will we take? Will we receive a love of the truth and escape these deceivers? If we receive the love of the truth then the Holy Spirit lives in us. He is the Spirit of truth and he enables us to discern the lie of the devil.

If anyone denies Jesus Christ came in the flesh he is a deceiver and an Antichrist.

2 John 1:8

When John teaches us to look to ourselves he is asking us to be careful what we believe and embrace.

There were people in John's day, and in our day, who attempt to teach Jesus is not fully human or he did not actually come in the flesh.

If someone accepts this false teaching they are set up for another lie. This lie is that because Jesus did not come in the flesh the first time then maybe he isn't coming in the flesh to the earth a second time.

These lies construct a framework of deception in the minds of people and lead them to accept the Antichrist. However, the Bible teaches us that in the same way Jesus ascended into heaven he will return again. Read **Acts 1:9-11**.

The prophet Zechariah also describes a day when the Lord himself will set his feet on the earth. Read **Zechariah 14:4**.

The devil does not want mankind to believe that Jesus Christ will return to this earth in the flesh. Instead, the enemy wants mankind to believe in a man with a "Christ" spirit. This is the Antichrist.

John gave a sobering reason why we should be diligent to guard ourselves against deception. Remember John was writing this letter to Christians and he warned of the possibility of losing a reward. It is John's desire in writing this that Christians receive a full reward.

The idea of receiving rewards when the Lord Jesus returns was also mentioned by Paul in his letters. Read **2 Timothy 4:7-8**. Paul gave a description of his reward as a "crown of righteousness". It would be a good idea to do a word study of "reward" in the New Testament.

Paul also mentioned the possibility of losing our reward in his letter to the Colossians. Read Colossians 2:18.

As in John's case Paul warned us of deceivers who cause us to lose a reward from the Lord Jesus. It is therefore of paramount importance that we guard what the Lord Jesus gave to us.

Here are some more scriptural exhortations along these same lines: **Revelation 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:13-14, Proverbs 4:23**.

2 John 1:9-11

The context of John's letter to the elect lady is to help protect the church from deceivers who attempt to take advantage of the hospitality of the church in order to further their goals.

John said there are many deceivers which are in the world. If there were many deceivers in John's day I cannot imagine how many deceivers we have now. There are more deceivers in the world than can be counted.

The way to discern deception is to have a love for God's truth. Not all "truth" is God's truth. There is also a wicked reasoning, logic, and philosophy which the world has. This logic of the devil was promoted by a group known as "Gnostics". These were the men John protected the church from. They denied the doctrine of Christ. We still have these deceivers in the world today promoting the same lies over and over.

What is the doctrine of Christ? From reading the letters of John I have a list of items I think belong in the doctrine of Christ:

Jesus is God and came into this world as a man. He is fully God and fully man. He is God who came in the flesh.

Anyone who lives a life of sin is not a child of God.

Anyone who hates his brother in Christ is not a child of God.

Our profession of faith results in a life of showing good practical compassion to others.

A Christian will continue to abide in the doctrine of Christ.

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three persons in one God.

In my comments I underline the importance that God is three in one and it is my opinion if someone denies this they are not Christian. I believe firmly a true Spirit filled Christian knows God is three in one. A true Christian knows God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I underline this because of the specific revelation God gave me. All the items listed here continually come under attack by deceivers in one way or another.

From John we learn the importance of the doctrine of Christ. If someone does not abide in the doctrine of Christ then we do not show them hospitality and we do not bid them Godspeed. I take this to mean we do not give them practical help as this is assisting people in a false ministry.

The Third Epistle of John

3 John Chapter 1

3 John 1:2

This is one of those scriptures which deceivers and false prophets like to abuse. It is ironic that the letters which John wrote are so abused by those who are the ones John warned us about.

If I never read the Bible and started reading from the book of Matthew in the New Testament and just kept reading until I got to this verse I would never think the word "prosper" referred to money or finances. After I read what Jesus said regarding rich men and what Paul said about the love of money I would never assume the word "prosperity" in this verse referred to money or finances. Those who do make that assumption show that covetousness is the attitude in their heart which they employ to interpret scripture.

What is prosperity for a Spirit filled Christian? Prosperity is a word which describes fruitfulness in the life of the Christian. What does a fruitful Christian life look like? Paul the apostle shows us in Galatians. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**.

A Christian who prospers looks like what Paul described. His life is filled with love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. This is a life of prosperity. This is a life of true prosperity and fruitfulness in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not about money or finances. That is an invention of the world system. Those who emphasize money in their preaching are in dangerous waters. When Jesus spoke about rich people and money it was all negative. He condemned men who were covetous and taught us that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Paul followed this up in his letters, teaching us that the love of money is the root of all evil. Why is the love of money the root of evil? Because it is idolatry. It is making one's self independent from God. It is the opposite of trusting in God day by day for our daily bread.

The scripture teaches us that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition. Do we think we are so special that we can desire money and somehow not be ensnared? Do we think we are so spiritually strong we can overcome the temptation which money brings? If a man thinks he is spiritually strong it is because his heart is filled with pride and false teaching. Read **1 Timothy 6:6-11**.

It would be a good idea to memorize these scriptures if one is tempted toward a desire for riches and money. Memorize these scriptures and meditate upon it. May God fill us with a fear of ever desiring a lot of money. Let us keep ourselves free from idolatry and the love of money. We cannot serve God and Mammon. (**1 John 5:21, Matthew 6:24**).

Don't be deceived into thinking that an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ would promote a doctrine in the church that Christians should prosper financially. This is a doctrine of demons which we see multiplied in the modern church like leaven. There is no doubt in my mind that we are living in the last days and the church is filled with men teaching doctrines of demons. Read **1 Timothy 4:1**.

It was John's purpose in writing these letters to warn the church about deceivers. It is just like the enemy to take the letters intended to protect the church and twist those scriptures to deceive Christians in the church. That is just like the enemy to do something like that.

Let us pray for true discernment. Let us pray we may receive the love of the truth so we will not be deceived by false prophets and false gospels. Let us stay in the word and stay in prayer daily.

3 John 1:7-8

This makes me wonder about ministries which I served under in the past who beg for money in front of Wal-Mart or who go to civic groups or door to door to raise money for their ministries. They justify this by saying their ministry is doing a public service and the whole community should support it.

After reading this scripture I doubt that fund raising from unbelievers is a scriptural way to support a church or a ministry.

Where does this money go to for these ministries? I have a lot of sad stories I could tell from working on the inside of these ministries but it is pointless and unproductive to write about it. I just pray the Lord gives me enough discernment to avoid these kind of churches and ministries in the future.

This again goes back to what is the goal of a church or ministry. Is it all about raising money, constructing buildings, and expanding the physical infrastructure? Or, is the goal of the church or ministry publishing the name of Jesus Christ? Those who say you can do both at the same time forget what the Lord taught us: You cannot serve the Lord and money at the same time.

What should our goal be? The Lord Jesus gave us the goal himself. Read **Matthew 28:19-20**. This promise of the Lord going with us reminds me of another promise. Read **Hebrews 13:5**. Thank you Lord for providing all of our needs.

3 John 1:9-10

Already in the early church there were men like Diotrephes who exerted personal authority and elevated themselves with positions. No doubt he had plans to start a school in his own name and give out certificates and titles to his students. This is how the Pharisees and religious leaders among the Jews operated. It is how religion operates to this day. People are promoted to positions with titles and given man-made authority.

However, authority from God comes simply by a man who speaks the truth. A man who is filled with the doctrine of Christ, who walks the truth, and speaks the truth, is the man with authority from God. Men can give out diplomas, certificates, and titles, but God gives authority to a man who is an overcomer in Christ Jesus.

John was disturbed that Christian missionaries were not given hospitality or help through this church as a result of this one man Diotrephes. John taught us to help support Christians who serve in ministry. It is our duty to show hospitality to those who take no help from unbelievers but rely instead upon Christians to help support their ministry work. Why would a Christian want to accept any money from unbelievers? The word teaches us not to make any agreements with unbelievers. (**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**).

Those who love position and prestige follow in the footsteps of the devil. This is the chief characteristic of Satan: pride. Read **Isaiah 14:14**. This is in stark contrast to the Lord Jesus Christ. Read **Philippians 2:5-8**.

This Diotrephes was controlled by the pride of life. See what the results of this are in the church? He rejects those who are true ministers of the gospel and cast out people in the church who support those true ministers of the gospel.

I am against the church setting up positions, titles, or creating a hierarchical system of control like the world system does. It is human nature to elevate men, though, and so it is probably impossible to change this until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

The futility of trying to change the modern church, however, will not stop me from proclaiming the truth.

I will continue to speak against pyramid structures, position, prestige, and the power of men.

May God's Kingdom come! May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Epistle of Jude

Jude 1:3-4

All Christians should be ready to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. There are men who seem especially gifted in contending for the faith. Some of these were a blessing to me and served to protect me from deception which permeates the modern church. I am thankful for the watchmen in the church who contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude pointed to ungodly men who turned God's grace into lasciviousness and denied the Lord Jesus Christ. It is hard to believe people think the doctrine of God's grace gives men the permission to sin. However, evidently this error was already present in the early church. Paul addressed this in **Romans 6:1-2**.

I like how Jude described the men who taught these errors and false doctrines. He said they were "*men crept in unawares*". These men are sneaky creepers. They slip in without anyone noticing and gain a position in the church where they can spread a false gospel.

Jude included a phrase which should instill the fear of God into these creepers: "ordained to this condemnation". God knew about these men already. These creepers did not slip in without God seeing them. The Lord knows their thoughts and words and actions. They are under God's condemnation. These men who teach error and false gospels are ordained to this condemnation.

A man called to teach God's word should pray constantly that he always teach the doctrine of Christ and not the doctrines of men or worse the doctrines of devils. We need to stay focused on the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the gospel. Do not stray away from this message.

These verses are an exhortation to be diligent in studying God's word. We need to be prepared to contend for the faith. Especially today when we are living in such a time of lies and deception. We need to saturate our heart and mind in the truth of God's word.

Here are scriptures which exhort us to be prepared to defend the gospel and contend for the faith: **2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 Peter 3:15, Titus 1:13**.

Jude 1:5-8

Jude put Christians in remembrance. I don't know if other Christians are like me but I need to remind myself of what the Lord showed me in the past. I keep returning and reviewing scripture and truth I learned before. I forget things and I imagine other people have the same problem. So it is a good thing Jude said he was putting them in remembrance of what they once knew.

Jude reminded them of how God dealt with sin in people as a group and as individuals. He reminded them that not all those who were in Israel saved out of Egypt actually made it to the promised land. Instead, those who were unbelievers in Israel died in the wilderness. This was God's judgment on them because of their unbelief.

The book of Hebrews reminds us of this same fact and gave this exhortation: "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*" (**Hebrews 3:12**)

Many people don't have a problem acknowledging God. They have a belief in God, probably not much different than the belief that devils have (**James 2:19**). This kind of belief however is not in the living God.

If faith is not in the living God then we have an evil heart of unbelief. Faith in anything or anyone other than the living God revealed in Christ Jesus is counted as unbelief.

Only faith in the living God counts for anything. Faith in the living God means a man fears God and believes in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the living God.

He is God three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is displayed as prophet, priest, and king. He revealed himself to the world through Israel, the church, and the kingdom. We can see him in type and shadow through the ark of the covenant the elements contained in it (**Hebrews 9:4**). He will wrap up everything for us in the New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven from God.

Revelation 21:2, "*And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*"

Jude reminded us that angels in the past chose to leave their home in heaven and descend to earth to commit sin. These angels God chained up in darkness. There are at least two different kinds of fallen angels. Jude showed there was a group which was chained up in darkness awaiting the final judgment. However, we also know there was another group of fallen angels that are working with Satan in the current world system. They are referred to by Paul in **Ephesians chapter 6** as "*principalities and powers*". Read **Ephesians 6:12**.

This is also mentioned in Daniel when an angel explained to Daniel why it took so long for him to receive an answer to his prayers. Read **Daniel 10:12-14**. There is an invisible spiritual battle taking place and we have a part in this war. This is the spiritual warfare which Paul pointed us to in **Ephesians 6**.

Jude continued to remind us about Sodom and Gomorrah and how the Lord dealt with that city. Why was Jude telling us about historical examples of God's judgment? He reminded us we need to cultivate a fear of the living God. Also, we need to remember God's judgment upon unbelievers, backsliders, and reprobates is certain. The Lord judges sodomites, demons, evil spirits, Satan, and unbelievers. This doom is prophesied by John in Revelation. Read **Revelation 20:10-15**, **Revelation 21:8**, **Luke 12:4-5**.

Jude 1:14-15

Jude pronounced a woe on deceivers who creep into the church. He put them in the same category as Cain, Balaam, and Core. He gave a vivid description of their character, how they act and behave, and the damage they cause.

What will be the final result of this? How will this problem ultimately be resolved in the church?

Jude pointed to the prophecy made by Enoch about the return of the Lord. Behold, the Lord cometh! He is coming back and he is not alone. He is accompanied by ten thousands of his saints. These saints are all those resurrected during the rapture of the church and enjoyed the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven while the seven years of tribulation took place on earth. At the end of that time of tribulation on earth the Lord steps back on this planet and is accompanied by the church. We will work with the Lord in the execution of judgment on this earth.

Jude repeated the word "ungodly" several times. Basically this is a description of men who have done away with God. They put God out of their individual and collective lives. They drove him out of their institutions. He was removed from their courts, their legislation, their law enforcement. He was removed from their schools and from the workplace. He was driven out of the homes and out of families.

This is a description of America today: ungodly! Without God in any way. America has separated herself from God and is now filling up the cup of her judgment. As surely as judgment fell upon the unbelievers in Israel during the wilderness, as certainly as judgment fell upon those angels who left heaven in order to sin, and as surely as judgment fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah, God's judgment is falling upon America. America will not escape the fate of every other past world empire which turned its back on God.

The Lord is returning! He will take vengeance on his adversaries. Read **Nahum 1:2-3, 6-8**. Amen, even so, return to us quickly Lord Jesus.

Jude 1:20-25

Praying in the Spirit means a Christian is faithfully dealing with any known sin in his life before the Lord. He confesses his sins to God, he repents, and he trusts in the Holy Spirit to enable him to live a holy life. When we are free from sin and walking in the Spirit it is much easier to pray. I can usually tell what my relationship with the Lord is by how hard or how difficult a time I have praying. If prayers are cold I ask the Lord what is wrong. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. It is our part to confess that we are wrong and God is right. I trust in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse me from all sin and unrighteousness.

My thought now is that praying in the Spirit is to pray to God without hindrance. I can pray in tongues but also pray in English so I can understand what I am saying. I do not think praying in the Spirit simply means to speak in tongues. I think it means we deal with the sin so we can walk in the Spirit and then our prayers are in the Spirit.

This makes sense to me in this context where Jude said we build ourselves up in our most holy faith. Living a life of righteousness, staying in God's word, and staying in prayer will build up our most holy faith. These actions the believer does keeps us in the love of God. We will constantly live with a clear conscience and have no doubt of God's love for us. It is only when we hold on to sin that we doubt God's love. This sin might be an evil heart of unbelief towards the living God.

We need to let our heart go beyond acknowledging doctrines about Christ to touching Christ himself each day. We need doctrine but we need to touch the Lord those doctrines point to. To settle for doctrine is like deciding to sit under a road sign instead of continuing on to the final destination which the sign points to. Good doctrine points us to Christ Jesus.

We keep ourselves in the love of God and we also look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is loving and kind toward us and filled with tender mercy. Read **Psalms 103:2-5**.

After exhorting the Christian to stay in God's love and live in the Spirit he reminded us of our responsibility toward others.

We have a responsibility to share what Jesus did for us. Showing compassion makes a difference. We may need to remind people to fear God and that a fire is waiting for those who do not repent. We point out sin which is like garments caked with dirt.

We see this pattern in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. To those who were humble he showed grace and compassion. To those who were proud he gave them God's law and would point out their sin. The Lord Jesus always demonstrated the love of the Father.

Don't be turned aside from duty towards others when they accuse you of being hard or mean. Sometimes proud people need to have their sin pointed out. God gives grace to the humble, but he opposes the proud. We need to adopt this pattern in our ministry to people. Don't be afraid to correct proud people of their sin. It is actually the most loving thing anyone can do for them.

What a wonderful promise we have at the end of Jude's letter. After reading about God's judgment upon the wicked we end with a tender word to the believer. God is able to keep us from falling. He will present us before himself without fault and with exceeding joy. I am certainly looking forward to this.

May the Lord have mercy on us this day and turn our heart to him in humility and in repentance. Let us not be of the group who is proud and wicked but instead let us join with the humble company of those saints who have gone before us. Amen.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation Chapter 1

Revelation 1:1-3

We have a promise from God that those who read this prophecy and keep the things written in it will be blessed.

To understand the statements "*the time is at hand*" we must consider that God looks at time differently than we do. With God a thousand years are like a day, and a day can be like a thousand years. From the perspective of heaven, then, this statement is true: "the time is at hand".

What time is it? The time for the fulfillment of everything recorded in Revelation. God revealed to his Son Jesus Christ everything in this book. Jesus sent an angel to John to show him the vision of what is written in this book. This book is the word of God and it is the testimony of Jesus Christ. The things written in this book will happen.

These events will shortly come to pass. This is God's testimony. These events will shortly come to pass. From the perspective of eternity all the events in this book shortly come to pass.

It seems like we have waited a long time for the fulfillment of Revelation. But from heaven perhaps only a moment has passed.

No matter how we interpret time the events in Revelation are true. Everything recorded in this book will come to pass. God wants us to know what will happen, so that when it happens we will believe that he is who he said he is. God is outside of time. He tells us everything we need to know about the past, present, and future so we can be saved and be reconciled back to him through what Jesus Christ accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Revelation 1:4-8

Jesus is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the ending, which was, and which was, and which is to come. This means the Lord was there in the past, he is here in the present, and he is already in the future. He is eternal. He is outside of time as we know it. He is past, present, and future. This demonstrates that God is three in one. God's nature and character is triune. God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John addressed this book to the seven churches in Asia. He greeted them with grace and peace. Who are the seven Spirits before God's throne? I don't know but it is easy to see that the number seven is important in the book of Revelation and in the Bible. It is repeated through this entire book. Seven seals, seven bowls, and seven trumpets. The time period of earth history covered in Revelation is seven years.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. There is no other reliable witness except Jesus Christ. Jesus told his disciples if they saw him they saw the Father. He is the perfect representative of God. He is the ultimate revelation of who God is. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can know God except by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the first begotten of the dead. He was not the first person in the Bible raised from the dead. There were people even in the Old Testament raised from the dead. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is unique. Jesus rose from the dead to never die again. Everyone else in the Bible who rose from the dead died again. Jesus will never die again. He defeated death. When Jesus rose from the dead it was to never die again. In this sense, he is the first begotten of the dead. He is the head of a new man and a new race of men. He washed us from our sins in his own blood.

The Lord has made us to be kings and priests unto God the Father. We can scarcely comprehend what that means yet.

The Lord will return. He is coming back in the clouds and everyone will see him. People will wail because of him.

Are you ready? Call on the name of the Lord. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 1:9-20

John was exiled to the island of Patmos because of his uncompromising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. John was a Christian and declared plainly he was a brother, a companion in tribulation, and a participant in God's kingdom and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ. He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard God speak to him. The voice was like a trumpet, and the voice said to John, *"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."* This voice is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. He gives John specific instructions to write down in a book what he would see and then send it to the seven churches in Asia.

When John heard the voice speaking to him he turned to see who it was, and we get a detailed description of the Lord Jesus Christ. John said that Jesus was clothed with a garment down to the foot and was girdled about his chest with a golden belt. His hair was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes filled with fire. His feet were like brass burning in a furnace and his voice like a waterfall.

John said Jesus had seven stars in his right hand and out of his mouth went a sharp sword, and his face was as bright as the noon day sun.

John could not stay on his feet when he saw Jesus. He fell down and passed out completely. The Lord Jesus touched him with his right hand and told him not to be afraid. Jesus said to him again that he was the first and the last. Jesus was dead but rose from the dead and is alive forever. Jesus holds the keys of hell and death. Jesus told John to write down what he saw in this vision.

The seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks were the seven churches. This book was written and a copy sent to each of those churches.

John's response at seeing Jesus was the same as others in the Bible who experienced a vision of God. Daniel fell down and passed out, too. The human body and soul cannot stand in the presence of God unless God gives man the ability to do so. We are the creatures. He is the creator.

Revelation Chapter 2

Revelation 2:1-7

This section was a message to the "angel" of the church of Ephesus. This message was from the one who has the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden candlesticks which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord knew about the church in Ephesus. He knew their work, labor, patience, and how they could not bear those who were evil. They were discerning about people who called themselves apostles but were not, and the church in Ephesus was not afraid to call out these false apostles and call them liars. This church endured patiently through hardships and trials, and they did not give up. Even though all of this is commendable the Lord still found a problem in this church.

What is this problem? They no longer loved Jesus like they did at first. Think about this like a new husband and a wife. They have a special love for one another. But as time goes on they can lose that first love if they are not careful. This is what happened to the church in Ephesus. They were careful to

do everything correctly, they were hard workers, and they endured hardship. But they no longer had much love in their hearts for Jesus, and probably, as a result, had little love for one another either.

What is the solution for this problem? Jesus told this church to remember where they were at first, to repent, and do the first works. What are first works? What did you do when you were first saved? What did you do as a new Christian? I remember what I did. I read the Bible like there was no other book on this planet. I prayed with complete simplicity of faith and believed God heard me. I was zealous in sharing my faith in God with other people. I memorized scripture. I meditated on God's word. I looked for ways to apply God's word to my life situations.

Jesus said that this church hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which he also hated. What are the deeds of the Nicolaitans? Look at how the Roman Catholic church operates and you will see a good example of the deeds of the Nicolaitans. It is a religious system that glorifies itself and claims the authority of God on earth. It is when men exalt themselves over other men in the name of God. It is what Peter talked about in **1 Peter 5:2-3**. Don't serve God for filthy lucre, don't lord yourself over other people. The Roman Catholics are an extreme example of the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but this is also deeply embedded in Protestant and Evangelical churches as well.

The Lord gave a promise to the overcomer in verse 7. Those who overcome will be given to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:8-11

The Lord commended the church in Smyrna. This was the second church in this list of seven churches. This message was from "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive". This can be nobody but the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The Lord Jesus was speaking to this church, and his message was one of encouragement, hope, and comfort.

The Lord knew the works, tribulation, and poverty of this church. Notice that when poverty is mentioned the Lord said also they were rich. What does this mean? It is the same message through the whole Bible. Hannah prayed in **1 Samuel 2:8**, "*He raiseth up the poor out of the dust...to make them inherit the throne of glory.*" The Lord will lift up his humble servants. Those whom this world despises but whom the Lord counts as precious.

Jesus said he knew those who said they were Jews but were not but were the synagogue of Satan. This reminds me of the conversation which Jesus had with the Jews in **John chapter 8**. Remember Jesus said to them they that were of their father the devil. Why? Because they tried to claim they were God's people while rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who claims they have God or that they are God's people but reject the Lord Jesus Christ are really the synagogue of Satan. The Jews today who reject Jesus Christ are not really spiritual people. They are religious and zealous for God but their zeal is not based on true knowledge. The true knowledge of God is found only in Jesus Christ. However, never, ever forget that these natural Jews are still loved by God. God loves the Jewish people even though their current religion of works is of the devil. Every religion outside Jesus Christ is of the devil. This is no reason to persecute or hate them but instead it is a good reason to share God's love with them by giving them the gospel.

The Lord encouraged this church to have no fear. Do not be afraid. Suffering and persecution would come, and they would face prison, but the Lord encouraged his people to be faithful and endure the tribulation. Be faithful even unto death. Why? Because Jesus will give them a crown of life!

Oh Lord, grant us grace and mercy that we may endure tribulation and that we may be worthy to receive this crown of life!

Jesus gave us a promise in verse 11. He who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death. There is a death that is even worse than physical death, and that is spiritual death. Do not die in your sins and be separated from God forever. Humble yourself today, call on the name of Jesus Christ, and be saved.

Revelation 2:12-17

Jesus described himself to this church in Pergamum as he who has the sharp sword with two edges. Why does the Lord describe himself like that? We read in **Hebrews 4:12** that God's word is compared to a sharp double edged sword. It divides asunder soul and spirit and joints and marrow and discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The Lord knows the depths of our heart. He knows us much better than we know ourselves. He sees everything and will bring everything into account.

This sharp sword is also described as coming out of the Lord's mouth. With this sword of his mouth he destroyed the man of sin in the last days as we see in **2 Thessalonians 2:8**.

The church in Pergamum has the unusual distinction of being located in the same area as Satan's seat. In other words, there is an actual place on earth where the devil had headquarters. This was in this city of Pergamum.

There was intense persecution against Christians in this area and they endured. A specific martyr by the name of Antipas is mentioned.

The Lord also pointed out that these Christians were infected with the leaven of false doctrine. These two types of false doctrine were called Balaam's doctrine and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Balaam's doctrine was that men are in the ministry for money. Balaam was a prophet for hire and also caused widespread harm to Israel through his evil counsel. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans had to do with men exalting themselves over their brethren in order to gain power and control over the church. The clearest example of this is the system of priests in the Catholic church. Jesus said don't call anyone "father" because we are all brethren. This doctrine of the Nicolaitans is clearly seen in the cult practices of the Catholic church. The prosperity gospel in American mega churches is a good example of the doctrine of Balaam.

Jesus warned this church if they did not repent he would come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.

He also gave this church an amazing promise in verse 17, which is special to me because the Holy Spirit gave this scripture to me on August 8, 2014.

Revelation 2:17, *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, that no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."*

Revelation 2:18-29

Jesus described himself to the church in Thyatira as the Son of God who had eyes like a flame of fire and his feet were like fine brass. Why would the Lord Jesus describe himself like this to this church? What does "eyes like a flame of fire" bring to mind? To me it implies his eyes see everything and his eyes can see right into the heart of this church. Feet like fine brass seems to point to the authority to tread underneath one's feet. What can hurt someone's feet which are brass? Not any snake, that's for sure. No rock, or pebble, or thorn can hurt feet that are like fine brass. His feet can stomp down anything, any devil, any difficulty. He can stomp it all down. (**Luke 10:19**).

The church in Thyatira was infected with a serious problem, which Jesus called Jezebel. Just like ancient Israel was corrupted from the inside out by Ahab and Jezebel so this church in Thyatira had a fatal disease. Jesus said he would kill the children of this Jezebel church with death. What does that mean? It reminds me of the teaching on the "second death" which is not only physical death but spiritual separation from God. In other words, these children of Jezebel don't just die physically but they are dead spiritually as well. They are fake Christians but in positions of authority or control within this church.

To use the name of Jezebel implies a great evil embedded itself into the house of faith. And yet, even though this evil was there, also described as "the depths of Satan", there were individuals who did not hold the doctrine of Jezebel. Jesus said he would not put any burden on these people but exhorted them to hold fast until he comes.

The Lord gave a promise to the overcomer. He who keeps the works of Jesus until the end was given power over the nations. This overcoming Christian was given authority to reign with Christ over the nations. Jesus said he would give this believer "the morning star". This reminds me of what Peter said in **2 Peter 1:19**, "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:*" This pointed forward to the new day of God's kingdom which is fast approaching.

How can you be saved today? Call on the name of Jesus. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Revelation Chapter 3

Revelation 3:1-6

The Lord Jesus described himself as having the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. Again, this is a slice out of the original description of Jesus Christ. Each church was associated with a particular part of the original description of Jesus. When we put all of the seven churches together, therefore, it provides a complete view of the Lord Jesus. The church living in unity, love, and truth is a clear picture of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord's exhortation was to be watchful and strengthen what remained and was ready to die. This brings to mind a building which was in need of repair and was in a state of decay. The building was full of dust and corruption and was barely breathing. People met, sang some songs, listened to a dry sermon, and went home. There was no life in this church.

What is the remedy for this? Jesus exhorted them to be watchful, and to remember what they received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. This is a word the Holy Spirit gave to me for my life. I need to remember what God said to me.

We need to hold fast what God gave us. We need to treasure what God gives us, and hold tightly to it, and constantly remind ourselves of the truth the Lord gave us.

The primary truth we need to cling to is the gospel outlined in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead.

Jesus told this church if they failed to watch then the Lord would return like a thief and the church would not know what hour he would come upon them. This language reminds me of exhortations Jesus gave his disciples in the gospel accounts. Look up the words 'watch', or 'hour' to see how the Lord repeated this exhortation over and over to his disciples and the church.

What are we supposed to be watching? I think a lot of people today who think they are God's watchmen assume that "watching" means to keep up with current events and news headlines. Is this what 'watching' really means? Or, does it mean we need to be careful that we don't backslide, or grow cold, or grow apathetic towards constantly growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus?

I think "watching" is a description of a Christian who has an aggressive attitude toward spiritual growth, maturity, and a passionate heart to become more like Jesus. It is a desire to be conformed to Jesus. "Watching" from this perspective is someone who is careful to avoid sin, and careful to maintain vigorous prayer, worship, fellowship, and witnessing to others.

"Watching" does not necessarily mean a Christian should be aware of current events as much as he should have a tenderness toward Jesus and a desire to grow in the Lord. Remember Paul said that he constantly reached forth to those things which were before and that he continued to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (**Philippians 3:13-14**).

Don't be led astray by modern day "watchmen" who focus on sensationalism and current events. Instead, get into God's word yourself, live an overcoming life for Jesus, and worship him daily.

Jesus gives us a promise here. Those who overcome will be clothed in white raiment, and the Lord will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but the Lord will confess his name before the Father and the angels.

Revelation 3:7-13

The Lord described himself as holy and true and having the key of David. What he opened no man could shut. What he shut no man could open. Remember John's original description. In John's description Jesus had the keys of death and hell. Keys represent authority and power. Jesus is able to save us from hell. No one can stop the Lord from saving us and taking us to heaven with him. He is able to shut the door of hell and no one can open it up. He can open that door, too, if people reject his offer of salvation.

The Lord was opening a door for this church in Philadelphia. No one could shut this door. The Lord noticed this church had a little strength in it, and kept God's word, and did not deny the name of Jesus.

Evidently there was a conflict between this church and some religious group who claimed to be Jews. All religions that deny the Lord Jesus Christ are religions created by the devil. A lot of cults claim to be the true Israel, or the true Jews. Beware of people who claim to be true Israel or Jewish. Most of these people are inspired by the devil. They are trying to claim some kind of spiritual authority by calling themselves Jews or Israel. But Jesus said he would eventually prove to everyone who truly belongs to God.

Jesus gave this church a special promise. He said because they kept the word of the Lord's patience then he would also keep them from the hour of temptation which would come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth. In my opinion that is a reference to the rapture of the church before the seven years of tribulation.

Jesus is coming quickly. Hold on to what God has given you so that no one can take your crown. What is this crown? It is a symbol of reigning and ruling with Jesus during the millennial reign of Christ on earth and also beyond that in the new heavens and the new earth.

Jesus made a promise to the overcomer. He will make the overcomer a pillar in the temple of God, and he will go no more out. Jesus will write upon him the name of God, the name of the city of God, the new Jerusalem, and also he will write upon the overcomer his new name.

There is a lot to take in while reading these verses. Take your time and meditate on these promises. Determine in your heart that you will be an overcomer in the Lord Jesus. Make up your mind to abide every day in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. God has placed us into Christ, and has united us together with him in death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

Revelation 3:14-22

In this message to the church in Laodicea the Lord described himself as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

The Lord knew the works of this church. He knew they were neither cold or hot but lukewarm. Because they were lukewarm he would spit them out of his mouth.

The Lord exhorted them to buy gold tried in the fire that they could truly be rich. This church thought it was rich because it had material wealth, but spiritually it was in poverty. This shows us the stark contrast between what the Lord considers riches and what the world system considers wealth.

Jesus said this church, despite what they thought of themselves, was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. This was a shocking state for this church to be in. What is more disturbing was that this church was completely unaware of its true spiritual condition. How is this possible?

It was possible because this church thought like the world. It evaluated its status according to the standards of the world system instead of evaluating itself by the truth in Jesus.

Jesus loved this church. He said those he loves he rebukes and chastens. He exhorted this church to be zealous and repent.

Verse 20 is often used in evangelism to the unsaved but in context the message was for the church. Jesus said he was standing at the door and knocking. If we will hear his voice and open the door he will come in, eat with us, and fellowship with us.

We have a promise for the overcomer in this church. Those who overcome Jesus will grant to sit with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and sat down with his Father on his throne.

The overcomer is the true Christian. It is the man who walks in the Holy Spirit and lives in the Holy Spirit. This is not a super spiritual Christian. This is a normal Christian. Those who think they are Christians but are not overcomers are not really Christians. They just think they are Christians because they are in a church. The Lord makes a constant distinction between those who are of the flesh (religious people who are deceived), and those who are of the Spirit, (those who truly belong to the Lord and are filled with the Holy Spirit).

Make sure you belong to the Lord. Call on his name. Ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. **Zechariah 4:6**, "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts*".

Revelation Chapter 4

Revelation 4:1-4

John's record of events changed at this point from messages to the seven churches to a vision of the throne in heaven and future events.

John saw a door in heaven opened and the first voice which spoke to him told him to come up to heaven and see the things which must be hereafter.

Immediately John was in the spirit and caught up to heaven where he saw a throne and someone sitting on the throne. He described the one sitting on the throne like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow around the throne which was like an emerald.

Why did John describe the one sitting on the throne like a stone? My guess is that it conveys the feeling this vision of God gave John. It conveys the feeling of weight and permanence. This person felt more real and more weighty than everything else around him.

One time my wife described a dream she had about an angel. She saw the angel sitting in a tree outside the house and looking in at her through a window. She said he was like a living statue. This angel, in contrast to everything else, felt more real, like he had more weight. Like a statue looks but alive.

This is my best guess at why John described the one on the throne in terms of a jasper or sardine stone.

John also saw 24 seats around the throne where 24 elders were sitting. The elders were dressed in white and had golden crowns upon their head.

This is the beginning of John's vision of heaven. Notice how specific he was in describing what he saw. He counted the number of elders and their seats. He noticed specific details. This shows how real these things are. This is not a dream or fantasy. This is spiritual reality. These things exist. There is a throne in heaven and God sits upon that throne.

We will all stand before the Lord one day. Are you ready to meet God? If you are not sure then you can make things right today. The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 4:5-11

In this section we get more details about what John saw around the throne of God. Out of the throne he saw lightning and heard thunder and voices. There were seven lamps of fire before God's throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal. In the midst of the throne and around the throne were four beasts.

John provided a detailed description of these four creatures or beasts. Notice he used the word "like" or "as" in this description. They are like a lion, a calf, like a man, and like a flying eagle. They were not those things but this was the closest John could get to describing their appearance. Also, they were full of eyes before and behind. The creatures have six wings and are full of eyes. They do not rest day or night but proclaim: "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*"

When these creatures gave glory to God then the 24 elders fell down before the throne and worshiped God who lives forever, and they cast their crowns before the throne. These 24 elders proclaimed: "*You are worthy, oh Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.*"

From this section we learn that God made creatures which man has not yet seen. These creatures exist in a realm invisible to us right now, but no doubt one day we will be there and witness what John saw.

The part I underlined here was what the creatures said about God. He was, and is, and is to come. Time is divided into 3 parts: past, present, and future. God is outside of time. He is eternal. He created time. Time is just another reflection of who God is, his character, and his quality. He was, is, and is to come. Just like time.

God is three in one. He is eternal. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Revelation Chapter 5

Revelation 5:1-10

John saw God holding a book written within and on the backside and sealed with seven seals. An angel proclaimed with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

No one at first was found who was worthy to take the book and open the seals. This caused John to cry but an elder said to him, "Do not weep". Why? Because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and loose the seven seals on it.

John looked and he saw in the midst of God's throne, and the four beasts, and the 24 elders, the Lamb of God. He had the appearance of a Lamb that had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God in all the earth.

The Lamb took the book out of the right hand of God who sat on the throne.

When he took the book the four beasts and the 24 elders sung a new song. The words of the song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

This song revealed a lot about the 24 elders. It showed they were once men whom the Lord redeemed out of every nation of men, out of every people, and family of men. Once they were redeemed the Lamb then made them to be priests and kings unto God. What is their future? They shall reign on the earth.

What is the future of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb? What do we have in front of us? We will reign and rule with Jesus on earth.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. He was slain for our salvation, and was raised up from the dead on the third day. He ascended to the right hand of God. He is the one who is worthy to take the scroll with the seven seals on it.

The seven seals were the first of 3 sets of sevens which would be God's judgments on the earth. These judgments brought an end to the old world system and would usher in the new world order of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Revelation 5:11-14

Here John was witness to all of heaven giving honor and glory and praise to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. What do they say about Jesus? *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."*

Not only did those in heaven worship the Lamb, but also every creature in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, and those in the sea, and all that are in them, worshiped the Lamb, saying: *"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."*

The four beasts said, Amen. The 24 elders fell down and worshiped him that lives forever and ever.

This scene reminded me of what the Psalmist said in **Psalms 150:6**, *"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."*

Victory in this life hinges on what you and I worship. Do you worship yourself through self-pity? Do you worship yourself by complaining, murmuring, slandering, or gossiping? Do you worship yourself by seeing everything only through the lens of how you benefit or lose? Are you incapable of turning your eyes off your own self and turning your eyes on Jesus?

Remember the words of the hymn:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free.
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

To be an overcomer in Christ you must learn right now to worship the Lord Jesus. Worship the Lord, begin right now, by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Turn your mind to his word. Meditate on the goodness of the Lord. Consider the great things he has done for you. Pray until you pray through and get the victory over self and sin and the world and the devil and death itself. Worship the Lord! Praise him with everything that is within you. Praise his holy name.

When you begin to lift up the name of Jesus Christ then the enemy will fall beneath your feet. Forget about your past, and reach forth toward what the Lord has prepared for you.

The Lord gives us the victory today. He is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

Revelation Chapter 6

Revelation 6:1-2

In this chapter we see the Lord starting to open the seven seals. He opened one of the seals and John heard a noise like thunder and one of the four beasts said to him: "Come and see."

What did he see? John saw a white horse and the man riding the horse had a bow and a crown was given to him and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

Many Bible commentaries say the rider on this white horse is the Antichrist, and that makes sense. He is a counterfeit Christ. We see later in Revelation when the Lord returns to earth he will be riding a white horse and will have many crowns, and he will be coming back to conquer the nations of this earth. However, this fake Christ will pretend to be the Lord. Notice that he has a bow, like a hunter, but no arrows or a quiver. This is because the Antichrist does not take over the world system by arms or violence, but instead he conquers the world system with a deceitful peace plan. He comes in the name of peace to take over the world system.

This was one of the seven seals of the scroll. This was ordained by God and will take place because it is the Lord who allows this man of sin to go forth on a white horse and conquer the world. He will

conquer the world like no other before him. Many have tried to conquer the world, but this man of sin, the wicked one, will succeed where all others have failed. He will gain control of the entire world system and the world system will be one united economic, political, and religious system with this man at the top of the pyramid. He will be the human vessel of Satan on earth.

Remember, this is a seal which the Lamb of God opened. Jesus is ultimately in charge of everything that happens during the seven year tribulation. God is always in control. The Lord already defeated Satan at Calvary, and this is only the next to the last attempt of the devil to destroy man and the world. He will get one more chance after the thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

It is time to get saved. Today is the day of salvation. Call on the name of the Lord and be saved today.

Revelation 6:3-4

In the last century we experienced two world wars. Not only that but we also had the Korean War and the Vietnam War as well. In this century we've had ongoing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the middle east. Millions of people lost their lives in these wars. However, these wars pale in comparison to what will happen when this second seal is opened by the Lord.

When Jesus opened this second seal John saw a red horse, and power was given to him that sat on the red horse to take peace from the earth and that people would kill one another. This rider had a great sword.

When the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples about the last days he described the events leading up to his return. He said there would be wars. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke the Lord was recorded saying that there would be wars and rumors of wars. These were signs pointing toward the end, but it was not the end itself. These great wars are sign posts that indicate that the end is coming but we are not quite there.

However, this war loosed on the earth during the tribulation will be unlike anything ever seen. We are getting glimpses of wars now. Will there be another world war? Are we going to see world war three take place in our generation? Honestly, I would not be surprised if this happens.

War was the second seal loosed on earth. Remember who is in charge of these seals? The Lord Jesus is the one who is in control of this. It is the Lord who sent this rider on the red horse. God is in control of all things. It is the Lord's final attempt to turn the hard heart of man back to their Creator before it is too late.

Wars are always the wrath of God. Remember this and repent today. Let us humble ourselves, and repent, and perhaps we might escape this war in our generation.

Revelation 6:5-6

The Lord Jesus opened the third seal. The third beast exhorted John to come and see. What did John see? He saw a black horse, and the one who rode on the black horse had a pair of balances in his hand. What does this represent? He also heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts which said: "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

This voice and the rider on the black horse with his balances points to world wide famine. I'd say there has never been a famine like the one which the rider on the black horse brings. When you hear the word "famine" what comes into your mind? Do you remember the images of children on the TV commercials with bloated stomachs and stick legs and arms? Yes, that is famine, but there is something even more horrific about famine which the Bible describes.

Go back and read the account in **2 Kings 6:24-33** and you will get a glimpse of the horror that is a famine. The famine here in this third seal will be worse than any famine which has ever been on the face of earth. The entire world will be afflicted by this famine. No one will escape from the horror of what is described in **2 Kings 6:24-33**.

Let this sink in. Do you want to be here during this? I certainly do not want to be on this earth when this third seal is opened. How can we escape this?

Luke 21:36, *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

Revelation 6:7-8

The Lord Jesus opened the fourth seal, and John heard the voice of the fourth beast saying to him, "Come and see."

What did John see? He saw a pale horse, and the one riding the pale horse was Death, and Hell followed him. He was given power over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and with the beasts of the earth.

We saw that war was loosed on the earth in a previous seal. War could parallel the sword. Also, we previously saw a seal with famine, which of course parallels hunger. But now there are two more elements included in this judgment released on the earth.

What is death? This scripture turns death into a personal entity riding on a pale horse. It also mentions death as the means by which people are killed. How can death itself be the means by which someone dies?

I think death is more than just the end of physical life. I think this is pointing to the spiritual reality that death is a spiritual power that can kill people.

Recently the Lord taught me about this. Death is something which Christians need to resist. It is possible for a person to die prematurely because they give in to this power of death. The Bible talks about the law of sin and death. There is a law, or principle of the power of death. It is at work in our bodies from the time we are born. It is eating away at us.

But when a man is born again by the Holy Spirit he now has the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can resist the law of sin and death.

We should never passively surrender or resign ourselves to death. We should always actively resist death. Death is an enemy for the Christian. It was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Death was defeated by the Lord and we as believers should maintain an attitude of resistance against death. The practical outworking of this is resistance against abortion, and euthanasia, and suicide. We should resist these attitudes in the world. We also resist the temptation to wish we could lie down and die. Depression can tempt people with a desire to give up on life and die. This is the power of death working on that person. Christians need to cast this out and resist this. It is just as evil as the temptation to sin. Remember this is the power of sin AND death. We are taught to resist the temptation to sin. Do we know we are also to resist the temptation of death?

I know Christians who are still alive but gave up on life. They are resigned to death. They are waiting for death to catch up to them. They are not actively or aggressively living each day for the Lord because they became passive. They wait on death to get them. This should not be our attitude.

The Lord taught me to resist this spirit of death. Now, I am not talking about a super spiritual idea that I think I will never die. I know I am living in a mortal body which will eventually wear out and pass away. I know this life on earth is temporary. But as a Christian I am not in agreement with death. I will not surrender to this power of death. Jesus said he came to give me life. I will abide in what the Lord Jesus. I will stand upon the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone might point out that Paul wanted to die. To the Philippians he said it was better to depart and be with the Lord. But he also said he would continue with them for their benefit. His work was not done yet. Therefore he was not giving in to death, even though Paul knew that heaven is a better place than this. Paul did not give in to the spirit of death. He was living for Jesus in his body. When the Lord told him his work was complete then he was ready to depart. (**2 Timothy**).

Death is something which can kill people. That might sound strange putting it like that. But you can die from the spirit of death. In this seal death is released on a pale horse and hell is with it. Death and hell go together. As a Christian, hell is not my destination, and death is not my friend.

Psalms 118:17-18, *"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death."*

1 Corinthians 15:54-57, *"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Revelation 6:9-11

There were people killed for believing in Jesus since the beginning of Acts. The first martyr was Stephen, and soon after James the brother of John was killed. Throughout the history of the church there were people who died for their faith. A good resource which records this history is the book "Foxe's Book of Martyrs".

Who were these specific martyrs under the altar of God? They are described as those who were slain for the word of God and the testimony they held. They were crying with a loud voice to God, "*How*

long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

They were given white robes and told to rest for a little season. They have to wait until their fellow servants and brethren are killed as they were. There is a specific number of Christians who will die as martyrs for Christ. God knows the number of those who will be slain for the Lord Jesus.

Notice these souls cry out for God's judgment. When people die like this the blood spilled on the earth cries out for God's judgment to come. Remember the blood of Abel cried out from the ground to God for justice.

How much innocent blood has been spilled in America? How many babies has this nation murdered? Does this nation really think it can escape from God's wrath and judgment?

Innocent blood cries out to God in heaven. And the Lord will act and he will avenge the blood of those who are murdered.

Our only hope is to humble ourselves and to cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness. Only the blood of Jesus can bring forgiveness of our sins. The blood of Jesus Christ God's son can cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But, this nation is not crying out for God's forgiveness. They are unrepentant, and hardhearted, and continue to practice wickedness and evil. The Lord will repay all those who have shed the blood of the innocent.

Revelation 6:12-17

When the Lord Jesus opened the sixth seal there was a great earthquake, the sun became black, the moon became like blood, the stars fell to the earth, and the heaven rolled back like a scroll. Every mountain and island were moved out of place. Everyone on the planet was terrified by these events. People hid in dens in the mountains, and hoped this would hide them from God and the wrath of the Lamb of God.

It is difficult to explain how these things could happen at one time. I've heard some try to explain this as the planet flipping over, like the north pole becomes the south pole. However, I don't think what was described in these verses can be explained through natural means. At that time men clearly believed that what was happening was divine intervention from God. People were terrified and they knew who was behind it. They knew it was the wrath of God falling on the planet.

How can people endure this and yet still not repent of their sins? As we continue to read in Revelation we discover a lot of people on earth during that time refuse to humble themselves and repent of their sins. Instead, these calamities only make them more angry at God.

Notice, there was no doubt about the existence of God during the tribulation. But instead of being in awe of God and humbling themselves men instead will continue to rebel in the face of God's direct intervention on the planet.

This is the confusion that sin brings. Remember how even in the face of God's wrath in Egypt that Pharaoh would not let Israel go? Remember how, in the wilderness, after seeing all the miracles from God the people would still murmur and complain against God? This is the deceitfulness of the power of sin in the heart of man.

Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"*

Do not listen to people when they tell you to trust your own heart or to look "within" for answers to your problems. The answer to your problems will not be found within your heart. The only answer for the problems in life are found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is the only solution for our individual problems and also for the problems which plague the entire planet.

May the Lord help us to humble ourselves, repent of self, sin, the world system, the devil, and to put our entire faith completely in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is our only hope for salvation.

Revelation Chapter 7

Revelation 7:1-8

John pulled back the curtain to reveal there were four angels in the four corners of the earth holding back the wind from blowing on the earth. As a result there was no wind on the earth, the sea, or on any tree.

There was another angel who ascended from the east who had the seal of the living God. This angel cried to the other four angels. It was the job of those four angels to hurt the earth and the sea but this angel from the east asked them not to do their work until he sealed 144,000 people from the nation of Israel. This seal would be for their protection against whatever wrath the other four angels brought.

I am of the opinion this 144,000 who were sealed are literally people from those specific tribes in the nation of Israel. You might ask how that is possible. Do those tribes even exist in the world anymore? If anyone knows this angel knows. If God knows who those 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel are then it is the Lord who knows. And this angel is told to seal 144,000 from those tribes in Israel. Like I said, I don't think these people are Gentiles, or just Christians in general. I don't think these are elite super Christians. I think it is exactly as the text says. They are 144,000 people from the 12 tribes of Israel.

Why try to assign some other esoteric or super spiritual meaning to the passage? Why try to twist this into meaning something other than the obvious reading it implies?

I realize there are a lot of spiritual things and symbolism used in the book of Revelation. However, when it is possible for a plain reading of scripture, I think we should plainly read the scripture. There is no mystical or esoteric meaning of the 144,000 who were sealed. These are people. They are from the literal nation of Israel.

This implies there will be a literal nation of Israel in the last days. It so happens that we do have a literal nation called Israel in the middle east. It was born in 1948 and is the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It is a sign that we are right now living in the last of the last days and end times.

Call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Ask God to save you from your sins before it is too late. History is wrapping up right in front of our eyes. Believe the gospel! Jesus Christ died upon the cross for our sins, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again on the third day. He is coming back to this earth. He will sit as King over the nations of this world. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 7:9-17

In this section of **Revelation chapter 7** we see a great multitude of people praising God. They praise God with words like these: "*Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, but unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*"

Someone asked John who these people were who praised God. John did not know and one of the elders told John these were people who went through the great tribulation. We know this because it says they will never again suffer through the judgments that struck the earth during the great tribulation. Some of those judgments are a great heat from the sun, and hunger, and thirst.

There will be believers in Jesus Christ on the earth during the great tribulation. Who are these people? Were these people saved after the tribulation started? We can't be for sure who they are but they are redeemed by the Lamb of God and they were on earth during the great tribulation.

There was a promise from God given to these people. I can see believers who may live during the time of this tribulation needing these promises and the hope this scripture gives them. The Bible promises those believers that they will hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike them, nor any heat. The Lamb of God in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd and guide them to fountains of waters of life and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

What a wonderful promise. This is here I believe specifically for the purpose of encouraging those tribulation saints, and to enable them to endure unto the end, and that their faith will not fail.

Revelation Chapter 8

Revelation 8:1-5

The seventh seal in Revelation 8 was separated from the first six seals in Revelation 6. We had a chapter in between describing the sealing of 144,000 Jews, and also there was a vision of the heavenly multitude praising God.

The seventh seal was opened and there was silence in heaven about half an hour. The fact John could estimate an amount of time in heaven is interesting to me. This means that even in eternity we will be able to count time in some way. There will still be a progression of history and events throughout eternity. That is hard to comprehend, but that is what this mention of time implies.

The seventh seal was like the prelude to the next stage which would be the seven trumpets. Seven angels received seven trumpets from God. There was another angel who took incense and the prayers of the saints and took it to the golden altar before God's throne. The smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. The angel took the

censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it into the earth. There were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

This section describing the seventh seal included a period of silence, the distribution of seven trumpets to seven angels, and also more tribulation for the earth.

This was the beginning of the second set of sevens. The first seven was the seven seals. Now came these seven trumpets. After the trumpets the final seven will be seven bowls of God's wrath.

Revelation taught me was that God works in an orderly fashion. There is a pattern, repetition, and order even when God poured out wrath on the earth.

If you pay attention you can know these patterns of God. When you see these patterns or signs as they are also called then it will help you to cultivate a fear of the Lord. God does not change. He works according to a set pattern which can be discerned if you pay attention. Watch therefore, and pray, and be ready for the return of the Lord.

Revelation 8:6-13

Here in this half of chapter 8 we read about four of the trumpets. Remember there were seven seals Jesus opened. The seventh seal introduces seven trumpets. These trumpets are blown by seven angels, and each trumpet releases various judgments from God upon earth.

The first trumpet released hail and fire mingled with blood and they were cast on the earth. A third of the trees was burned up, and all green grass on the planet was burned up.

The second angel sounded and a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea. A third of the sea became blood, a third of all sea creatures died, and a third of all ships on the sea were destroyed.

The third angel sounded and a great star from heaven burning like a lamp fell on a third of the rivers and fountains of waters. The name of the star was Wormwood. A third of the waters on earth become wormwood. Many men die because of these poisonous waters.

The fourth angel sounded and a third of the sun and moon and stars was darkened and there was light for only a third part of a day.

Another angel flew through the heavens crying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound!"

A quick summary of what happened in these four trumpets. Trees, grass, water, oceans, the sun, moon, and stars were all affected. This represents a lot of the natural world which we take for granted. Can you imagine all of the green grass on the entire planet gone in smoke? Can you imagine only having light for a third part of a day? How long is that? A few hours of light?

Can you imagine living on this planet when this happens? You do not want to be here. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus today and be saved.

Luke 21:36, *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

There is only way you can ever be found worthy by God. Put your entire trust and faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation Chapter 9

Revelation 9:1-12

The fifth angel sounded the fifth trumpet and a star fell from heaven to the earth. This star was called "him" in this verse. To him was given the key of the bottomless pit. Later in this section this fallen star was also called Abaddon or Apollyon, and he was the king over these hellish locust creatures that ascend out of the pit to torment everyone not sealed by God. Remember back earlier when an angel went forth to seal those 144,000 Jews? Now we see why they were sealed. This seal protects them from these locusts coming on the earth out of the bottomless pit.

Some speculate these creatures are futuristic technology. Maybe that is true, but I think this is something we have never seen before. I don't think these locusts are man-made technology which gets out of control. I think these are literally demonic creatures out of hell which come upon the earth to torment mankind. We have a specific description of their appearance: locusts, crowns of gold, faces like men, hair like women, teeth like lions, breastplates of iron, wings with a loud sound like chariots going to battle, stings in their tails. They have power to hurt men for five months.

Another interesting phenomena happened. Men were so distressed by these creatures that they wanted to die. Perhaps people tried to commit suicide because of the locust creatures. But the Bible says men were unable to die during this five months. Death flees from them! How is this possible? It is a mystery, but these events will unfold exactly as the Bible describes in that specific time.

No one in their right mind would want to be on earth during this seven years of tribulation.

Isaiah 55:6-7, *"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."*

Revelation 9:13-21

The sixth angel sounded the sixth trumpet, and a voice from the four horns on the altar of God told the angel to let loose four other angels which were bound at the river Euphrates. The fact these four angels were bound already tells us these are not "good" angels. We see their mission was to go forth and to kill a third of mankind on the earth.

We also see an army of two hundred thousand thousands. My math may be wrong, but I think that is 2,000,000 in that army. We have a detailed description, and again, this army does not sound like a normal human army, though it might be. John was describing what he saw using language from his time in history. He may have been seeing some kind of modern warfare or futuristic warfare or this army might have just been straight supernatural out of hell.

The important point for me is verse 20. The rest of mankind that was not killed by these plagues did not repent. They continued to worship the work of their hands, and devils, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. They did not repent of their murders, or sorceries, or their fornication, or their thefts. Even with all of these horrible things taking place men still did not humble themselves and repent of their sins. This reminds me a lot of how Pharaoh hardened his heart when God poured his wrath upon Egypt.

If we do not repent now there is no guarantee we will repent later. Today is the day of salvation. Do not put this off another day. Humble yourself, bow your head before God, and repent of your sins. Confess your sins to God, and God has promised he will forgive us. **1 John 1:9**. How can he forgive us? Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins upon the cross. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

Revelation Chapter 10

Revelation 10:1-11

John saw another strong angel. This angel had a foot on the sea, and another foot on the earth. He cried with a loud voice like a lion and when he cried seven thunders uttered their voices. John would record what the thunders said but an angel told him not to write it down. Evidently it was to remain a mystery what the meaning of the seven thunders would be.

The voice of the Lord told John to take the scroll from the strong angel. The angel gave it to him and said that when he ate it the taste would be like honey in his mouth but would make his stomach bitter. This reminds me of the prophet Ezekiel because he also ate a book which tasted like honey.

After John ate the scroll he was instructed to prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

There is a spiritual application for the Christian in ministry. If we preach God's word then we must first consume God's word ourselves. If we are to give God's word to others then we must first have God's word in our heart.

The heart of this chapter remains a mystery. We don't know the meaning of this strong angel or the meaning of the seven thunders.

We do not need to understand everything. At the moment, let us just learn the facts presented to us, and make application to our lives. Let us stay in God's word, and learn to relate it to our every day life situations, and obey the Holy Spirit when he speaks to us.

Revelation Chapter 11

Revelation 11:1-6

Many people get hung up on the identity of these two witnesses. If the Lord wanted us to know who these two witnesses were he would have told us. I think this is one of those hang ups people have in the

same vein as the question of who was Cain's wife. These are questions the Bible doesn't answer. Why do we enjoy speculation so much though? We have plenty of spiritual food here without going off on rabbit trails.

Again, I am reminded of the prophet Ezekiel. A reed like a rod was given to John and he was told to measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship there. This is similar to what we see in the book of Ezekiel when an angel measured the temple for Ezekiel.

John was given specific instructions not to measure the court that was outside the temple. John was told this outer court was given to the nations and that they will tread the holy city under foot for 42 months. How long is 42 months? 42 months equals 3 1/2 years. This is half of the seven years of tribulation.

The Bible reveals a little bit to us about these two witnesses of God. They are described as the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth. This reminds me of the prophet Zechariah. Read in the book of Zechariah and you will see these two mentioned there as well.

These two witnesses have supernatural protection from God. If anyone tries to hurt them then fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies. This reminds us of the prophet Elijah who could call down fire on those who wanted to harm him.

Also, these two witnesses had power to shut the heaven so that it did not rain during the days of their prophecy. Again, this reminds us of what Elijah did during 3 1/2 years in Israel. This was a big part of Elijah's ministry in Israel.

The fact we are constantly reminded of Israel's history and Israel's prophets is further confirmation that this seven years of tribulation is about God dealing with the nation of Israel. Everything we see here has types and shadows in the history of Israel and the prophets.

These men also turned water into blood and smite the earth with every plague. This reminds us of Moses and what happened when God brought Israel out of Egypt. All of this is very Hebrew. And of course we are also in the city of Jerusalem during this.

I am not as interested in who these men are as I am interested in what they point us toward. These men represent the fact that God is bringing the entire history of Israel to an ultimatum. Everything God promised to Israel is in the rapid process of being fulfilled through these two witnesses. The Lord will fulfill all of his promises he made to the nation of Israel.

Revelation 11:7-14

Eventually the two witnesses finished their 3 1/2 year testimony. When they completed their ministry the beast out of the pit attacked them and killed them. Who was this beast? As far as I can tell this was the Antichrist, the man of sin, the wicked one, the man whom Satan used to manipulate and control the entire world system in that day.

The entire world was happy when the prophets were killed. They left their bodies in the street of Jerusalem. They sent gifts to one another and celebrated the death of these men of God.

However, after 3 days these men were raised to life again. They were resurrected and then God called from heaven and they ascended into heaven in the sight of all people.

After this a great earthquake hit the city and a tenth part of the city fell. Seven thousand people died in this earthquake. Those who survived were afraid and acknowledged that God was the one doing all these things.

The second woe was complete. A third woe was on the way.

From my understanding of the timeline these two witnesses were in action for the first 3 1/2 years of the seven year tribulation. They died right at the midpoint. There were other events taking place at the same time. This was a turning point. From this point forward we go from tribulation into what is called the "great" tribulation. This is why we have this warning here of a third woe coming quickly. It gets worse for those who refuse to humble themselves and repent.

Revelation 11:15-19

The seventh angel sounded the seventh trumpet.

John heard great voices in heaven and they proclaimed: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he said to pray God's kingdom would come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Here we see the answer to this prayer. The Lord Jesus will reign over all the nations and his kingdom will last forever.

The twenty four elders fell on their faces and worshiped God, and said, "*We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and were; because you have taken your great power, and did reign.*"

We are moving without fail to the establishment of King Jesus and his kingdom. The Lord will return and every knee will bow before him. He is King forever.

The nations are angry but God's wrath puts them in their place. The time for the judgment of everyone who died came. Time came when God rewarded his prophets and saints and to everyone who feared the name of the Lord, both small and great. God will destroy all of those who destroyed the earth.

John looked into the temple of God in heaven and he saw there the heavenly ark of God's covenant. There are lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

In summary, we see the reality of God's kingdom coming to the earth. Unsaved men and nations are no longer allowed to run this planet. The Lord will rule over all the nations, and with him will be his people reigning and ruling with him over every nation. This is the reward and the inheritance of Christians. The meek will inherit the earth. It will happen. This is an eternal reward and not the temporary power which the current world system offers men. Reigning with Christ will endure forever.

I am looking forward to this with all of my heart. My treasures are in heaven and my heart is there also. I am looking forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will wipe away all of my tears, and he will remove all of my reproach. Amen.

Revelation Chapter 12

Revelation 12:1-5

The woman and the dragon was a vision which used symbols to communicate the meaning of what God wanted to share with John. From the description we have of this woman and dragon and the man child caught up to heaven I believe that this is historical and prophetic. The woman with the twelve stars is the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel brought forth the Messiah, the Man Child, who is Jesus. The Lord Jesus after he was resurrected ascended back to heaven. The dragon is of course the devil or Satan, and he persecutes Jews and Christians. The third part of the stars that fell with the dragon are the fallen angels who were deceived by Lucifer, or Satan, or the devil. As a result, they fell with him. God cast them out of heaven.

It is hard to tell if this is past, present, or future. Remember Jesus said he saw Satan cast down from heaven like lightning. This seems to indicate some historical fall of Satan. However, we also will see a further fall of the devil when God casts him down again to the earth as we see here in Revelation 12.

To understand Bible prophecy you have to lose the idea of it being like fortune telling. It is not like that. Bible prophecy is more like seeing clearly the character of God and the patterns by which he has dealt with the universe, and the angels, and with man in the past. When you see how God deals with something in the past, then you know how he will act again. This is why Bible prophecy is more like a repeated pattern through history. Understand the pattern and you can know what will happen in your life, in the lives of your family, and also even in a nation of people. If people act like they do today in America then they can expect that God's wrath will fall on them over and over. This is already happening, and has been happening for a while, and will continue to happen until America is gone or repents.

The man child will rule all the nations with a rod of iron. There is no one else who fits this description but Jesus Christ. He is coming back, and his kingdom will be forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 12:7-12

A long time ago I memorized **verse 11**: "*And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death.*"

This is important because it gives the Christian knowledge of how to overcome the enemy. This section of scripture clearly shows us that the enemy attacks through accusation. He accuses God's people night and day. How do we defend ourselves from the attack of Satan? This scripture teaches us how to overcome the accusations of the devil. We overcome because of the blood of the Lamb. Also, we have a testimony. Our testimony is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Jesus ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God Almighty interceding and praying for us. He is our advocate before the Father in heaven. He has brought his blood before the mercy seat, and his work of cleansing us, forgiving us, redeeming us, and sanctifying us is complete.

Here we see the curtain pulled back and a war taking place in heaven. This battle includes cherubim, arch angels, and all the angels of God in a battle against Satan and the fallen angels of the devil. The devil is cast out of heaven and all the fallen angels are completely cast out of the heavens to the earth.

When this happens the devil knows he only has a short time left. He is filled with wrath and immediately goes to make war against the people of God.

A great voice in heaven says: *"Now is come salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. The accuser of our brethren is cast down..."*

The enemy was defeated at Calvary. His final judgment is yet to come. His eternal destination will be the lake of fire which burns forever.

We must endure patiently until the Lord completes everything he has planned. The Lord is on the move, and we see the fulfillment of his word in the day we are living in. Things will only accelerate and go faster the closer we get toward the end.

Revelation 12:13-17

The dragon is the devil. God cast him down to the earth and he persecutes the woman who brought forth the man child. I believe this woman is Israel and the man child is Jesus. Therefore, we are see a description of the devil persecuting Israel. We have a symbolic description of how he persecutes Israel. It says the dragon cast out of his mouth water like a river to carry away the woman. The earth opens its mouth and delivers the woman from the flood of water. The woman receives wings like an eagle to fly away into the wilderness where the Lord protects and provides for her for 3 1/2 years. This points to the second half of the tribulation, which is the great tribulation.

This takes place around the same time the two witnesses are killed and raised up. It also takes place at the midpoint when the Antichrist goes into the temple and declares he is God and erects an abomination of desolation.

Israel is no longer deceived as to who this Antichrist is. She runs for her life to escape the clutches of the dragon.

When the dragon is unable to destroy the woman it turns its attention to persecuting the seed of the woman. This seed of the woman in the earth are those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. These are the tribulation saints.

In the book of Genesis we begin with a woman and a serpent. Now we see the battle has evolved between a woman and a dragon. The devil is no longer trying to be subtle or hide who he is or his intentions. He goes forth to steal, kill, and destroy. There is nothing subtle about a dragon. Notice this dragon does not send out fire out of his mouth, but instead he sends forth water out of his mouth. His goal is to not to consume with fire but instead to overwhelm and drown people.

How can we apply this to our life today? In what ways is the devil working in the world right now to overwhelm and drown people? I think one way I can see is through the internet and through the constant beating of drums in politics, and news propaganda and through street protests. The enemy tries to overwhelm people and wear out people.

Daniel 7:25, *"And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time."*

The only safe place for us in these last days is to be shut in with the Lord. Stop listening to the constant beating of the devil's drums. The words of the devil are in the airways and it destroys people's lives. The enemy wears people out. We need to go into the wilderness and learn that God is our provider, God is our protector, and God is our portion forever. Stop listening to the world system and go to the Lord.

Those who will not go into the wilderness with the Lord will be overwhelmed in the last days by the water coming out of the dragon's mouth.

Doesn't it seem strange that a dragon is not breathing out fire, but instead is breathing out water? He can't consume people with fire, but he will seek to drown people by his words. Escape from the voice of the enemy by shutting yourself in with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation Chapter 13

Revelation 13:1-10

This chapter introduced two beasts. Some people might forget that along with the Antichrist there is also another man who is known as the false prophet. These two work in agreement with Satan to bring the entire world system into subjection.

The Antichrist is seen rising up out of the sea. The sea is a symbol for the nations of the world. This Antichrist will arise through political manipulation onto the world stage. The description we have of this beast goes along with the vision which God gave to Daniel the prophet. We see in Revelation the fulfillment of what God showed the prophet Daniel concerning the nation of Israel and the last days. This is another reason why I believe that the seven years of tribulation is a time where God is dealing primarily with the nation of Israel.

The ten horns and seven heads point toward his political power. These numbers represent kings or kingdoms which the Antichrist gains power over. He is described as a leopard, a bear, a lion, and the dragon gives him his power. All of these beasts are predators and are the most fierce and dangerous land animals that you can run into. They are all at the top of the food chain in their respective domains. This man is a combination of all these beasts. He might not be completely human at all but a mixture of something else like the account of Nephilim in Genesis.

He is a counterfeit Christ even down to the details of being killed and raised up again from the dead. He is killed with a head wound but then rises again from the dead. This is probably a diabolical magic trick but the world believes in this black magic and believes in him. They are so astounded they wonder who is like unto the beast, who can make war with him? This is a super man. Is this why we see so many movies about super heroes like superman, batman, Thor, and the like? Is iron man, and spider man, and all of these super heroes in the movies a preview or brain washing of mankind to prepare us for a super man to take control of the world? I think it probably is.

Notice that when this man opens his mouth that blasphemy against God flows out of him. He blasphemes God, God's tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. He has power to make war against the saints of God and he overcomes them. As shocking as it may be, the Lord allows this blasphemer to defeat his people during the tribulation. Many of the tribulation saints will die at the hand of this

monster. The holocaust will not even compare to the blood shed which will take place under this man of sin.

Everybody on this planet will worship this man of sin. Everyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life will worship Satan. There will be no neutral ground. You are either for the devil or for God. There is no middle ground, no fence straddling. You are filled with the Holy Spirit or you are filled with the devil.

There is a word of encouragement here to the tribulation saints. God is asking them to be patient and remain faithful to the end. There is going to be suffering, and death. Many believers will die during this time on earth. Remain faithful to the end, and they will receive the crown of life. God himself will wipe away all of their tears one day.

Revelation 13:11-15

The second beast which appeared was the false prophet. This beast was said to rise out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. This association with a lamb points to the fact this beast is religious. He had authority and power like the first beast, but his function was to point men to the Antichrist. He performed supernatural signs and wonders to deceive people into worshiping the first beast. He initiated the construction of an image of the beast. This image seemed to reflect the fact this first beast died and was raised to life again. This image was animated in some way so that it can speak. The false prophet had power to kill anyone who would not worship this image.

Who else in the Bible does this remind us of? This points us back to the book of Daniel again. The king of Babylon tried to force Daniel's three friends into worshiping an idol of gold made to look like the heathen king. This is a type of what we see fulfilled in Revelation. As I mentioned previously Bible prophecy is a pattern which repeats itself over and over.

We have these two beasts exposed in **Revelation 13**. These two men will bring more destruction on the human race than has ever been seen. They do it through words, lying, signs, wonders, and miracles. They will work together with the devil to bring the world into one political, religious, and economic world system. This is the one world order that is coming on the earth during this seven years of tribulation. We can already see the world rapidly moving in the direction of this new world order beast system.

We see how the enemy brings the world together as one through political and religious means and next we will talk about how he unites the world in one economic system.

Revelation 13:16-18

During this seven year tribulation everyone on earth who was not a believer in Jesus would have a mark put into their right hand or forehead. This was called the mark of the beast in scripture. No one would be able to buy or sell without this mark of the beast. The mark of the beast was associated with the number of a man which was 666. No one, rich or poor, would be able to buy or sell without this mark. This means the world would be under extreme consolidation. The movement towards a one world system will accelerate rapidly in the years to come. When this man, called the beast, arrived on the world scene the infrastructure for this mark of the beast would already be put in place.

Do we see right now the world system moving toward a one world money system? Do we see this? Of course we do. We see this in the gradual decline in the use of cash. We see this in the use of credit cards, debit cards, and systems of technology. No doubt this system will become more streamlined and there will arise a digital world currency. We already see this happening with bitcoin and crypto currency. This is all heading toward a one world monetary system which will be cashless.

Look at the Amazon stores now that you can go into and never interact with a checkout. As soon as you pick up items and walk out the door it is automatically detected and through an app in your cell phone the transaction is automatically made through sensors in the store. This is touted as modern convenience. Convenience and security will be the flags of this movement toward having no cash. We also see with the corona virus pandemic how people are scared to use cash now because of a fear in spreading covid-19. No doubt those who are pushing us towards a cashless society will take advantage of these types of fears people have. They are pushing us, and pulling us toward their new world order.

The mark of the beast is coming. We don't have to be paranoid about this. We won't be tricked into doing this. It will be out in the open, but there will be such heavy deception that people will not perceive the evil behind it just like what we see happening today. People are deceived by convenience, or security issues, or health issues. The trap is being laid, and eventually this trap is going to spring shut on the entire planet. No one on this planet earth will escape this satanic web.

The only ones who will discern what is happening are Christians who are walking in the Holy Spirit. Be saved today and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Our only hope in these last days is the Holy Spirit to provide for us, and protect us, and to be our portion forever.

Revelation Chapter 14

Revelation 14:1-5

Previously we read about this 144,000 who were sealed in their foreheads. Now we discover what that seal looks like. It is the name of the Lamb of God and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. They belong to Jesus completely.

Again, John heard the voice from heaven and there was the sound of harps and singing. These 144,000 which were sealed sang praises to God and before the living creatures and the elders. No one but those 140,000 sealed could sing this song.

This group was described as virgins meaning they were completely set apart and sanctified to the Lord. They were not in agreement with the harlotry and idolatry of the world system. They completely live in dependence on God as their provider, protector, and portion forever. This was a group of witnesses for Jesus who did not speak any lie and they were without any blemish.

From the amount of attention this group received in Revelation I infer they were subject to extraordinary circumstances. These were believers in Jesus living on earth during a time of extreme violence and darkness. The Antichrist directed all his power at destroying every believer in Jesus. But this 144,000 had special protection from God, and were no doubt serving God in a unique way throughout this 7 years of hell on earth.

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 14:6-13

Three angels flew through the heavens with messages from God to those who were on the earth. The fact men could see and hear these angels should cause us to pause and consider. This will be an unprecedented time in the history of this planet. By this time men would no longer doubt the existence of God and the supernatural. They will see it. They will hear it. Men will still choose, however, to reject the free offer of God's forgiveness through his son Jesus Christ.

The message of the first angel was "*Fear God*". This was a call to acknowledge God as creator, the one who made the heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. This God who created all things is constantly attacked by modern false science. You cannot get away from the lying propaganda of evolution and all of the systems of lies that accompany this lie. But here an angel was exhorting men to fear God and worship the creator God.

The next angel proclaimed the doom of the world system by saying, "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*" This Babylon points to government, business, and religious systems which stand in opposition to God. This angel proclaimed the doom of government, economic systems, and religious systems which exalt themselves against the God of heaven.

The third angel warned that anyone who received the mark of the beast would be thrown into hell. Anyone who worshiped the beast or the image of the beast or received the mark of the beast would fall under the wrath of God Almighty. They would be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Their torment ascended up forever.

I don't know of a more precise and clear proclamation of the doctrine of hell. Hell is real, and anyone who rejects Jesus Christ is going to burn in that place forever. There is no end to hell. There is no end to the torment of that place.

Here was another word of encouragement to the tribulation saints alive on the earth during that time. They need to endure and be patient. God promised they would be blessed who would endure to the end. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. God will give them rest from their labors, and their works follow them. They will receive a reward from the Lord for their patience and endurance during this tribulation.

In summary, those who take the mark of the beast are doomed to hell. There is no second chance for anyone who takes the mark of the beast. If you are on earth when this happens it would be better to become a Christian and die than to take the mark of the beast and suffer for eternity in hell fire. The choice is clear. Choose life in Christ even if it means you lose your life on earth.

This choice is before us today. The consequences are the same for anyone today who rejects the gospel. The gospel is easy to understand. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 14:14-20

The earth is similar to a field planted by a farmer. At harvest time the farmer harvests the crops. Jesus taught parables about the harvest at the end of the age. Here John described for us a vision of this harvest. The Lord Jesus is on a cloud with a crown on his head and a sickle in his hand. There are angels involved in this harvest just like Jesus said there would be.

What does it mean when the Lord Jesus starts harvesting the earth? Remember what Jesus taught. The good fruit is gathered into the Father's barn. The bad fruit is cast away. The good fish are collected and the bad fish are thrown out.

There is a set time when the Lord will harvest the earth. Everything in this created earth will come to its conclusion. There will come a final moment and culmination of history on this earth. The Lord will harvest the earth.

An angel thrusts a sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth. He cast it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. The wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the wine press, up to the height of a horses' bridle.

The book of Revelation describes God's wrath on the earth. It is more than wrath; it is also a harvest. The Lord is looking for ripe fruit.

Make sure your life is bearing the fruit which will remain. See **Galatians chapter 5** for the fruit of the Spirit.

How can we bear this fruit? We must be born again, and we must be filled continuously with the Holy Spirit. Put your faith and trust in Jesus and what he accomplished for you through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Revelation Chapter 15

Revelation 15:1-4

John saw another sign in heaven. He saw seven more angels which had the seven last plagues. This was pointing toward the last set of seven plagues. Remember there were seven seals and then seven trumpets and finally seven bowls of God's wrath. God's wrath is measured, methodical, and it has a beginning and an end.

John saw a sea of glass mingled with fire. He saw the tribulation saints in heaven who got the victory over the beast, the image of the beast, the mark of the beast, and the number of his name. They stood on the sea of glass and had harps of God. How did these tribulation saints get the victory? They probably were martyred for their faith in Christ. They overcame because they did not love their life even unto death. They gave everything for Jesus Christ.

These tribulation saints sang what is called the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. Here are some of the words to this song: "*Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true*

are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Notice the repeated mention of the nations. A lot which happens in Revelation is related to Israel, but it is also a description of how God brings the nations into submission to King Jesus. All the nations shall be ruled by the Lord Jesus. He is God's appointed ruler over all the nations.

Psalms 2:10-12, *"Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."*

Remember after the seven years of tribulation Jesus will restore the earth during a thousand year reign on earth. This will be the seventh day of rest for the earth. This will be a time of peace on earth. It will come to an end and then God will create a new heavens and a new earth. However, the kingdom of the Lord Jesus will endure forever and ever, as Daniel the prophet showed us with his vision of a stone made without hands that destroys all the kingdoms of the earth.

Revelation 15:5-8

John saw the temple of the tabernacle in heaven opened. Remember God told Moses to make a tabernacle for Israel after the pattern in heaven. There was a tabernacle of the testimony in heaven. John saw it open.

Seven angels came out of the temple, and they had seven plagues. These angels were clothed in pure and white linen and have on their chests golden belts. One of the four creatures gave the seven angels seven bowls of God's wrath.

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. No man was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels was fulfilled.

This was the beginning of the last set of seven plagues from God on the earth. There were seven seals, seven trumpets, and then seven angels with seven bowls of God's wrath.

In the next chapter the specifics of these seven bowls of God's wrath is described.

Everything God does has a specific time and measure. Everything is done in order and is measured. Nothing is out of control. God is over all of his creation, and there is a time for everything. This seven years of tribulation on earth is the time of God's wrath.

How can you escape from God's wrath? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Revelation Chapter 16

Revelation 16:1-16

A voice from the temple commanded the seven angels to go forth and pour out the bowls of God's wrath on the earth.

The first angel poured out his vial and a noisome and grievous sore came on all men who took the mark of the beast or worshiped the image of the beast.

The second angel poured out his vial on the sea and it became as the blood of a dead man and every living soul died in the sea.

The third angel poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of water and they became blood.

An angel of the waters proclaimed: *"Thou art righteous, oh Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy."*

This reminded me of the scripture which said that God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows he shall also reap.

The fourth angel poured out his vial on the sun and men were scorched with fire. The men who were scorched with heat blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent or give God the glory.

The fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the beast, and his kingdom fell into complete darkness, a darkness that caused pain and made people gnaw their tongues in pain. These unrepentant people blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.

The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the river Euphrates, and it was dried up to make a highway for kings of the east.

Three unclean spirits like frogs came out of the mouth of Satan (the dragon), and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. Here we see these three are united in a trinity of evil which was another of the devil's counterfeits of God.

These spirits of devils work miracles and go forth to the kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Jesus said, *"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."*

God gathered all the nations together for a great battle to a place that in the Hebrew tongue is called Armageddon.

One thing which stood out to me in this passage was how no matter how much people suffered they refused to repent and humble themselves. Suffering only drove them further into madness. This is what happens when people harden their hearts and go on stubbornly in pride. When pain and suffering comes it only produces blasphemy from them. They have crossed over into darkness and can no longer find their way back any longer. It is too late.

Today is the day of salvation. Listen to the Holy Spirit today in the day of God's grace. Seek the Lord while he may yet be found, and call upon him while he is near. Forsake your life of unbelief and pride, and humble yourself under God's hand. Put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Revelation 16:17-21

Here was the final bowl of the seven bowls of God's wrath. This completed the final set of seven judgments. These 3 sets of seven began with seven seals, moved to seven trumpets, and now concluded with these seven vials of God's wrath.

In this final bowl of God's wrath a great earthquake rocked the planet. Cities across the world fell at once. Mountains were moved out of place, and islands were moved to new locations.

Jerusalem was divided into three parts and the cities of the nations fell. Great Babylon was now at the center of God's attention and he brought the full weight of his wrath against the system of Babylon on earth.

Also, in this seventh bowl a great hail out of heaven fell on the earth. Every stone was about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of this plague of hail, because this plague was exceeding great.

This vial was poured out into the air. This reminded me that the Bible exposed Satan as the prince of the power of the air. A voice from heaven said, "It is done." The kingdom of the devil is crumbling and will pass away completely.

A new day is coming. It is the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation Chapter 17

Revelation 17:1-5

One of the angels which had the seven vials of God's wrath came to John to show him the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters. This whore committed fornication with the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

John was carried away by the spirit into the wilderness where he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast full of the names of blasphemy having seven heads and ten horns.

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color and was decked with gold and precious stones and pearls and had a gold cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

Upon her head was a name written: "*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*"

This vision of the woman riding the beast symbolizes false religion which works with the Antichrist to form a one world order. Probably the clearest manifestation of this in today's world is the Roman Catholic church, but it is also seen in every false religion which tries to organize and unify itself through a false peace and a false unity. This is how the devil will unite people in the last days. He will use a counterfeit religion which pretends to be Christianity, or pretends to be Judaism, or pretends to be Islam, or pretends itself to be any other false religion on planet earth today.

These false religions work hand in hand with the Babylonian world system that will culminate in the Antichrist system in the seven year tribulation.

There is no more dangerous thing in the world to destroy men's lives either spiritually or physically as that of this woman who rides the beast. She is the poison that infiltrates every church on this planet and tries to turn men away from simple faith in Jesus to some ritual, or tradition, or spiritual law. She is the inventor of such things as 12 step programs. She is the inspiration for false religion, and cults, and every compromising, backslidden, unbelieving church in the world.

The only protection against this woman riding the beast in these last days is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The only protection we have is the Spirit of truth in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 17:6-13

This woman riding the beast is drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus.

John was horrified at the sight of this woman. What has killed more Christians than anything else? False religion. False Christianity as represented by the Roman Catholic church is one. Others are Islam, and Judaism. These religions have killed more Christians than anything else.

Killing Christians in the name of God is the most common way Christians are persecuted and killed. Jesus saw it and said it would happen. He told his disciples that they would be persecuted and killed. He told them not to be afraid of those who can kill the body, but fear God instead. We are to fear God who has power not only to kill the body but also to cast a man into hell.

That is exactly where this woman riding the beast is heading. She is heading to the lake of fire. As we shall see, though, this system of religion is destroyed by the ones it helps to create the one world order. Eventually the government and business arms of the one world order turn on this religious branch and destroy it.

The mystery revealed is that this beast is the Antichrist who receives his power from ten other kings. These ten other kings might be head of nations, or also I've wondered if they might be the CEO's of ten powerful corporations who rule the world behind the scenes in the last days. I know there are corporations that exist today that are as powerful and wealthy as nations.

Here we see the spiritual reality behind this Antichrist. What animates this man is an evil spirit that shall ascend out of the bottomless pit but will go into perdition. Everyone on the earth who does not have their name written in the Lamb's book of life will be in awe of this man of sin.

These kings which give the Antichrist power have one mind and give their power and strength to the beast. This phrase "have one mind" is interesting, as it implies a complete unity in evil purpose and desire.

For more background on these kings and their relationship to the Antichrist you can read the book of the prophet Daniel. He also points to these kings and describes them as various beasts, and also exposes this man of sin who speaks great blasphemy.

Now is the time to be saved, before all of these horrible things happen on earth. Now is the day of salvation. Call on the name of Jesus and be saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Revelation 17:14-18

The enemy attempted to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ. However, as the scripture made plain here, the Lamb shall overcome them. All he has to do is open his mouth and speak and the beast and the false prophet will be put down. Jesus Christ is Lord of lords, and he is King of kings. Those who are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Now we understand the waters which the whore of Babylon sat on were actually people, multitudes, and nations, and tongues. The Bible interprets itself many times just like this. We see a vision with symbols, but if you continue reading the Bible you will receive the interpretation for those symbols and types.

Here we see those ten kings with the beast will turn against the whore and make her desolate and naked. In the end, all religion, true or false, is put down by the man of sin so that everyone will worship him alone. The time will come when he will not tolerate anyone worshiping anything else but him.

It is God himself who puts it into the hearts of these ten kings to fulfill his will and to give their kingdoms to this beast, so that the words of God shall be fulfilled. No matter what the devil tries to do it is still God who allows and orchestrates all of these events during this seven years of tribulation.

The woman is also represented by a great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. This shows the power of false religion in world government and in the business world. But the time will come when religious power will be destroyed in favor of economic, political, and military power.

Now is the time to be saved. Today is the day of salvation. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus today and receive forgiveness of sins.

Revelation Chapter 18

Revelation 18:1-8

Babylon is more than religious power or political power, but is also the economic or business world Babylon. In the last chapter Babylon was represented by a false religious system that worked with the nations of the world. In this chapter Babylon was represented as a city of commerce and trading. Some have said this may be New York, but I see it as representative of the entire business world system which exists within this Babylonian framework. Remember, the world system which man built in cooperation with Satan is government, business, and society. (**1 John 2**). Here we see the fall of the business part of the world system.

John saw another angel come down from heaven with great power and the earth was illuminated by his glory. He cried with a loud voice and proclaimed the downfall of Babylon. He said Babylon is fallen and is a house of devils, a hold of foul spirits, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. All nations drank the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth became rich through her abundance.

John heard another voice from heaven, saying, "*Come out of her, my people, that you do not participate in her sins, and that you do not receive her plagues. Her sins reached heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*"

Babylon worshiped herself but she shall fall in one day. Death, mourning, and famine shall come to Babylon and she shall be utterly burned with fire. Strong is the Lord God who judges her.

This command to come out of Babylon is repeated throughout the Bible. It is a call for God's people to separate themselves from the spirit of the world system. We are not to walk in agreement with a system that operates by the pride of man, that promotes covetousness, and is controlled by the lust of the flesh. We are to separate ourselves, and our goal while still in this world is to be ambassadors for Christ. We were given the commission of the word of reconciliation. Our job is to witness, testify, and call men to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Our goal is not our own life, or money, or worldly success. Our goal is the same as Jesus Christ. To reconcile men back to God.

This world system will burn with fire. Don't walk in agreement with this world system, or you also will find your life's work burned up in the fire. (**1 Corinthians 3:13**).

Revelation 18:9-20

John saw the end of economic Babylon. The end of this world system in the business part of it ("the lust of the eyes"), will be destroyed swiftly. The downfall of economic Babylon will be swift and sudden. From the description of this city which fell suddenly and was burned with fire one may wonder if a nuclear bomb was dropped on a city.

When I read these verses I always think about New York City and years ago the prediction by David Wilkerson that New York would be destroyed suddenly by nuclear bombs from the north sent from Russia.

A time is coming when the world economy will suddenly collapse and will never recover. These verses go into great detail describing all the facets of the economy.

At the end of this description heaven rejoiced because God avenged his holy apostles and prophets. It is interesting that the world economic system is set in contrast to God's holy apostles and prophets. Why does the world system hate God's prophets so much? Because they preach the same message Jesus preached. Man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. The rich will be brought down. God will lift up the humble and the poor. But those who have sold their soul to this world system will be burned in the fire.

The world lamented the fall of Babylon but heaven rejoiced. The end of this world system will be the beginning of the reign and rule of the true King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is coming back, and he will rule over all the nations on this planet.

Prepare to meet the Lord. Call on his name today and put your faith in the work which Christ accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Revelation 18:21-24

John saw a mighty angel take a great stone and cast it into the sea, and the angel proclaimed, "*Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*"

This is a specific moment which will come when everything this world system has built through business and the economy will be completely finished. It will be destroyed suddenly, like a bomb falling on a major city and wiped out in a moment. This world economic system will be destroyed completely and will never recover again. After this world economic system is destroyed it will not be coming back.

Next after the end of this world economic system will be the kingdom of God on earth. We will never go back to this system as it is right now. No more will men make a great name for themselves and build corporations and assign men numbers in order to control them and subjugate men into bondage to idolatry and covetousness. This fallen economic system we live in today will be destroyed and will never come back again.

Notice how this world economic system was tied directly into the murder of God's prophets and saints. The reason why God's prophets are killed is a result of the way this world operates in its economic system. This is why the Pharisees killed Jesus. He threatened their position, their power, and their pocketbook. If they had accepted Jesus they would have lost their money and power.

The end of this world economic system will be the beginning of what the Bible said about the meek. The meek shall inherit the earth. God's prophets and saints will work for Jesus in his kingdom, and the economy in that kingdom system will have nothing to do with the pride of men, the names of men, or numbering men into subjection and bondage. Everyone will be set free to serve God in love, and each one will love his neighbor as himself. That will be the economy of God on earth. A kingdom of love where each person helps the next one and everyone serves one another in love.

There will only be one name exalted in that day, and his name is exalted above all others. Jesus! King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Revelation Chapter 19

Revelation 19:1-5

Heaven rejoices at the downfall of the world system which is pictured here as the great whore of Babylon. The world system of Babylon is in direct opposition to God and God's Kingdom. Therefore, all of heaven rejoices when God's judgment brings an end to that world system.

How much of this world system is evil? **1 John 5:19**, "*...and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" That is how much of the world system is evil. The entire system from bottom to top is evil. It is built on the foundation of death and hell, and killed God's people at every opportunity.

God is just in destroying this world system. Heaven rejoices at seeing God's justice poured out on this evil world system of government, business, and society. (**1 John 2:15-17**).

Verse 3 shows us that the smoke of Babylon's doom rose up for ever and ever. There is no end to God's wrath against Babylon. God will always hate and abhor any system that separates man from him. The world system is a counterfeit of who God is. God is Provider, and Protector, and Portion forever.

The world system attempts to counterfeit these attributes. It tries to protect us through government, it tries to provide for us through business, and it establishes self-worship through society (culture, entertainment, arts, false religion).

A voice comes out of the throne saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear him, both small and great."

Believers in Jesus are united in rejoicing at God's judgment upon this great whore of Babylon. We rejoice because this satanic system which pretends to be God is thrown down and destroyed. The smoke of its destruction will rise forever and ever.

Come out of Babylon. Repent of your attitude of independence from God. Return to the Lord and confess that Jesus Christ is your provider, he is your protector, and he is your portion forever. This is summed up for us in the prayer which the Lord taught his disciples. Go back and read it again, and understand the meaning of those words. (**Luke 11:1-4**).

Revelation 19:6-10

There was an event described in this section which was called the marriage supper of the Lamb. A marriage supper means that the bride and bride's groom are now brought together as husband and wife. This is the event at which the church and the Lord Jesus Christ are united together. We are united in a time of great celebration.

There is a voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, as the voice of mighty thunder, saying, "*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*" I heard a pastor preach a message one time on that Bible verse, and it stuck in my head, so that many times when I am praising the Lord I will proclaim: "*For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*" This is a truth we should get into our spirit. It will take you through many trials in life to know that God is always in control.

A mention is made here of the fine linen of the bride, clean and white. The fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And the saints have no righteousness but that which is imputed unto them by the Lamb of God through his death, burial, and resurrection. Every born again Christian who loves Jesus is part of this multitude who is dressed in this white raiment. These are the overcomers who put their faith and trust in Jesus alone for salvation.

Praise God for we have been invited to this marriage supper of the Lamb! Who will come and dine? Who will hear the message, and believe the gospel? Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Those who hear, and receive, and believe will eventually find themselves seated at the great marriage supper of the Lamb.

John was overwhelmed and fell down at the feet of the angel. But the angel exhorted John not to do that but instead to worship God. Then the angel said to John, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

What is the testimony of Jesus? The Lord Jesus gave himself for us. He purchased us in his own blood upon the cross of Calvary. He died for us, and he was buried in a tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead, and he ascended back to his Father in heaven. He lives forever interceding for us and praying for us. He will return to this earth and reign over the nations. He is King of kings, and he is Lord of lords. He lives forever!

Call on the name of the Lord. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 19:11-16

John saw heaven opened and a white horse appeared. On the white horse was the one called Faithful and True. In righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are as a flame of fire and on his head many crowns and he has a name written that no man knows but he himself. He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and his name is called The Word of God.

The armies of heaven follow him on white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean. From this description we know this is not just angels but this is the redeemed saints with the Lord at this battle.

Out of the Lord's mouth goes a sharp sword and with it he smites the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

On his vesture and on his thigh is a name written: "*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*"

This is the second coming of Jesus Christ. He is coming back to wage war against all of the nations on this planet, and he will bring them under submission. He will cast down the world system of the beast, the false prophet, and the devil. He comes back to execute the wrath of God against fallen man and against the devil.

He is KING OF KINGS. He is LORD OF LORDS. No one will ever take his place. He is God's King forever and ever.

Every knee shall bow. Every tongue shall confess. Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 19:17-21

At the second coming of Jesus Christ the Antichrist and false prophet are gathered with their armies to do battle against the Lord Jesus Christ. But they will fail in spectacular fashion. The Antichrist and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire. All the armies of the devil are destroyed by the sword of God coming out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

An angel bids for all of the birds of the air to come and eat the flesh of those who fall in this battle. All the kings of the earth are put down in this battle, and the birds eat on the flesh of kings, and captains, and mighty men, and horses, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

The beast is taken and the false prophet that wrought miracles before him which deceived them that received the mark of the beast and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse which sword proceeded out of his mouth and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

This Antichrist has a short time on earth and his doom at the return of Jesus Christ is swift and final. The Antichrist and the false prophet find their eternal doom in the lake of fire.

Revelation Chapter 20

Revelation 20:1-6

An angel from heaven came down with a key to the bottomless pit and also with a great chain. He laid hold on the dragon, the serpent, the Devil, and Satan. These are all names or descriptions of that one enemy of God and man. He is bound with a chain and thrown into the bottomless pit for one thousand years. He is not allowed to deceive the nations for one thousand years. After the thousand years he will be let loose one final time for a short while before he is thrown into the lake of fire forever.

John saw thrones and those who sat on them and judgment was given to them. John saw the souls of those who were beheaded for their witness for Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast, his image, or received his mark in their forehead or hands. These overcomers reign with Christ for a thousand years.

The rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished. Those who are already alive are part of the first resurrection. Those who are in the first resurrection are blessed and holy and the second death has no power over them. They are priests of God and Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.

These verses teach us a lot. One lesson here is that of the millennial reign of Christ on earth. The Lord Jesus returns to earth and will reign over the nations for a period of one thousand years. Believers in Christ will also reign with the Lord during that time. The believers who lived during the seven year tribulation are especially remembered here because they were beheaded for their witness and testimony of Jesus Christ. This is a word of encouragement to anyone who suffers like this as a Christian.

Also, we see the Devil is not an abstract concept of evil but is a personal entity. The Devil is a real creature that exists in the world, and has a specific part to play in the world and will ultimately meet his judgment. It is interesting that the Devil will be taken down by just one angel with a key and a chain. The Lord himself did not deal with the Devil but just sent one angel to take him out.

There is a literal bottomless pit. Some think this might be the center of the earth. It could be, or could be a spiritual dimension also. He is cut off from being able to influence mankind during the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. However, at the end of that thousand years he will be let out one last time to deceive the nations in a final confrontation between God and man at Jerusalem.

Those who do not have part in the first resurrection are those who will suffer from the second death. The second death is basically complete separation from God and eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

If you put your faith in Jesus and call on the name of the Lord you can be saved from that second death. Those who were born once will die twice, but those who were born twice will only die once. Be born again today, receive Jesus Christ into your heart, and be saved.

Revelation 20:7-10

After the thousand years of Christ's reign Satan is loosed from his prison. He goes out and deceives the nations in the four quarters of the earth. He gathers them together to battle. The number of people who join him is as the sand of the sea.

These followers of Satan compass the camp of the saints and the city of Jerusalem. Fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours this Satanic army.

The devil who deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Again, we understand the reign of Christ on earth is a literal thousand year reign. However, his kingdom never ends. The thousand year reign of Christ on earth is just the beginning of God's kingdom that endures forever.

Satan is released from the bottomless pit back to the earth. When he arrived he immediately deceived nations and multitudes of people. This tells me that though men live in a paradise on earth for a thousand years under the Lord they still seek to rebel against Jesus at their first chance. This shows the utter depravity of man in his natural state. If a man is not born again by the Holy Spirit he always rebels against God. Man left to himself is a fallen creature and always turns away from God.

Why does God allow Satan this final opportunity? One purpose might be to prove forever that man is lost without God. Even if man is given a perfect government on earth he still rebels against his Creator. This proves once and for all that man's problem is not his environment or education. Men are born sinners and need the Savior Jesus Christ to give them eternal life. Without Jesus we are doomed to the lake of fire.

The devil has a specific destination. He is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. This is also the destination of every person who rejects Jesus and follows the devil.

If there was a multitude who came up to Jerusalem to make war then who were these saints in God's camp in Jerusalem? I believe they are the last remnant God takes. They are people saved by faith in Jesus during the thousand year kingdom. They put their faith in Jesus, and at this last battle they fled to Jerusalem to escape the armies of Satan. God took a remnant during the time of Israel, he took a remnant during the church age, and he takes one last remnant of people at the end. There are three people, but they are united in one body. Just as God is three in one, so also God's people are three in one.

God is three in one. Prophet, priest, and king. Israel, church, and the nations. Three days, and then all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:11-15

John saw a great white throne. God sat on his throne and the earth and heaven ran away from him because there was found no place for them. Creation itself gives way before the presence of God Almighty.

John saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. This is the final judgment of man. This is an event no one will miss. Every person in the world stands before the Lord at judgment. Every one shall give an account of himself to God.

The dead were judged out of those things written in the books according to their works. This means people are judged according to what they did in this life. When men reject God's free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ then they have to stand before God and justify their life through their good works. The problem is that no one can ever do enough good works to atone for their sins. The most fundamental and horrible sin we can commit is to reject God's Son Jesus Christ. Those who appear before God at this judgment on the basis of their own good works will be rejected. These dead who are judged by their works are heading to the lake of fire.

The sea gives up the dead, and death and hell deliver up their dead, and all of these dead people are judged according to their works.

Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. This lake of fire represents the final separation from God. There is no hope of return for anyone who is cast into this lake of fire.

Anyone who is not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire.

How do you get your name written in the book of life?

There is only one way. His name is Jesus. Jesus is the only way to have life. It is only by putting your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior that you can have your name entered into this book of life. This book belongs to the Lamb of God. If you belong to him your name will be in that book.

I earnestly plead with you today to humble your heart and confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. Believe in your heart today that Christ died for your sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation Chapter 21

Revelation 21:1-8

John saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth passed away. And there was no more sea.

John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. He heard a great voice out of heaven that said, "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*"

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Those things have passed away.

He who sat on the throne said, "*Behold, I make all things new. Write: for these words are true and faithful.*"

Jesus is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. He gives to anyone who is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Verse 7 is an amazing promise: "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*"

There is also a dreadful declaration in verse 8 which we need to take to heart, because it will happen just as God said: "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*"

Again, we see clearly that the second death is this lake of fire. And we see the people who are going there. They are fearful (cowards), and they are unbelieving (they reject the Bible and Jesus), they are whoremongers (sexual immorality), and sorcerers (witchcraft, horoscope, mediums, spiritualists, diviners, necromancy, etc), and idolaters (those who give themselves over to the love of money and power), and ALL LIARS (people who reject the Spirit of Truth and who live as if God does not exist). These people are in the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Do not let another day go by without bowing your knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. Humble yourself, believe the gospel, and be saved. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

Revelation 21:9-27

John saw the New Jerusalem, the great city of God coming down from God out of heaven. We have a detailed and vivid description here of this city. Notice how much exact detail is given. We even have the measurements of this city. This city is real. It is just as real as anything right now that you can see, hear, and touch. This city is real. It is the city of God.

One of the seven angels who had the seven last plagues in the bowls comes to John to show him the city. The angel calls the city the bride, the Lamb's wife. The angel carried John away in the spirit to a

great and high mountain, and showed John that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

This city is made of valuable and precious materials, stones and gems and gold and glass. It has a great high wall, and has twelve gates, and the names of the twelve tribes are over each of those twelve gates. The names of the twelve apostles of Jesus are in the twelve foundations of the city.

There is no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. There is no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it because the glory of God lights up this city. The Lamb is the light of the city.

The nations of those who are saved shall walk in the light of the city. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into the city. The gates are not shut by day and there shall be no night there. They shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

No one who defiles or works abomination or who lies will enter this city. Only those whose names are written down in the Lamb's book of life shall enter this city.

This New Jerusalem is the destination of every born again child of God. This will be our eternal destination and home. We will be with the Lord forever and ever in his house. Amen.

Revelation Chapter 22

Revelation 22:1-5

John saw a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river were trees which bore various fruit for life every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There is no more curse there, but the throne of God and the Lamb of God shall be there and his servants shall serve him. They shall see his face and his name is in their foreheads. There is no night there and they need no candle nor light of the sun because the Lord God gives them light and they shall reign for ever and ever.

I've given this river a lot of thought. Jesus mentions water of life a few times in the gospels, and also Ezekiel records a river of life that was flowing as well. Some compare this river to the Holy Spirit flowing everywhere and giving people life. I think there is literally a river in heaven just like John describes. It is a river of life that gives life to people and there are trees there with the fruit of life and the leaves are for healing nations.

I think it is interesting how the nations are mentioned in connection to these trees. We have spent much time examining God's relationship to Israel or to the church, but have not given much thought to God's dealing with the nations. I think that in the millennial kingdom of Christ there will be another remnant God takes from the nations. God will teach mankind true spiritual government and authority in his kingdom. The leaves of these trees will be for the healing of those nations. What do they need to be healed from? Men need to be healed from the thinking and brain washing of this current world system that was inspired by Satan and men who are in agreement with the devil. The nations need to be healed from the way of thinking that controls man today in this current world system.

We will learn a new way of thinking in God's kingdom, and it is much different from the way that people operate today in this current world system. God's kingdom is not based on the pride of man or men making a name for themselves. Instead, God's Kingdom is based on His Son Jesus Christ. Everything will flow forth from the King. Man was not made to live independently from God. For thousands of years on this earth man has tried to live successfully without his Creator. God will demonstrate to mankind that this is impossible.

Revelation 22:6-17

Jesus told John that he is coming quickly. A blessing was pronounced on anyone who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book of Revelation. An angel rebuked John for falling down to worship him and told him to worship God instead. He also told John not to seal up the book because these things must shortly come to pass.

Again, Jesus repeated the admonition that he is coming quickly. His reward is with him to give to every man according as his work shall be. Jesus is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed are those who do God's commandments that they might have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Outside the city are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and whoever loves and makes lies.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. Let him that is thirsty come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

This is an urgent invitation for people to come to Jesus, put their faith in him, receive salvation and eternal life by faith in him. Jesus is the living waters. He is the bread of life. He says here that he is the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star.

Jesus is coming soon! Are you ready? You can get ready today by trusting in Jesus, calling on his name, and believing the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Revelation 22:18-21

John warned anyone who heard the prophecy of this book not to add anything to these words. If any man shall add to these things God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. If any man shall take away from the words of this book God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

This is a stern warning concerning the word of God and the gospel. Adding to God's word or taking away from God's word can bring eternal destruction to men's souls. This is the most serious business which anyone can enter. We are to be faithful to proclaim the simplicity of the gospel always, and not add to God's word our own fallen opinions. Every time men add to God's word it damages the church. Every time men take away from God's word it hurts God's people. Adding and subtracting from God's

word leads people astray. Adding and subtracting from God's word or the gospel is what the devil does to inspire men to build cults and false religions which damn the souls of men.

Read the book of Revelation and see what God said to us. I have tried through this commentary to point people back to reading and studying Revelation for one's own self.

Jesus testifies to us: "*Surely I come quickly.*" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Jesus is coming back to this earth.

Do you know how to be saved and have your name written down in the Lamb's book of life?

It is as simple as believing the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Believe the gospel, receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and tell others the truth about Jesus. Let others know that you are a Christian. Read the Bible, study, meditate, memorize, and obey what you read in God's word. Find fellowship with other Christians.

May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and make his face shine upon, be gracious unto you, and give you peace. Amen.

Mike Kines
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